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ABSTRACT

The Newspaper section of the Proceedings contains the following 16 papers: "Reader-Friendly Journalism's Lasting Impact: A Study of Reporters and Editors Involved in Knight-Ridder's 25/43 Project" (Kris Kodrich); "An Analysis of Online Sites Produced by U.S. Newspapers: Are the Critics Right?" (Jon Gubman and Jennifer Greer); "Self-Promotion and the Internet" (Steve J. Collins); "Is the 'Women's Section' an Anachronism? Affinity for and Ambivalence about the "Chicago Tribune"'s WomaNews" (Melinda D. Hawley); "Assessment of Lead Writing Practices in U.S. Newspapers" (Gerald Stone); "New Study Contradicts Medsger's 'Winds of Change'" (Fred Fedler; Tim Counts; Arlen Carey; Maria Cristina Santana); "Journalism's Status in Academia: A Candidate for Elimination?" (Fred Fedler, Arlen Carey, and Tim Counts); "Newsroom Topic Teams: Journalists' Assessments of Effects on News Routines and Newspaper Quality" (Kathleen A. Hansen; Mark Neuzil; Jean Ward); "Net Gain?: New England's Online Newspapers Assess Benefits and Drawbacks of Their Electronic Editions" (Mary Jane Alexander); "Newspaper Readership Choices of Young Adults" (Carol Schlagheck); "Changing Values in the Newsroom: A Survey of Daily Newspaper Staff Members" (M. David Arant and Philip Meyer); "Newspaper Editors' Policies and Attitudes toward Coverage of Domestic Assault" (Wayne Wanta and Kimber Williams); "Sisyphus or Synergy: Effects of TV-Newspaper Collaborations on Voter Knowledge" (Jurgen Henn); "A Big Enough Web for the Both of Us? Online Coverage of the 1996 Election by Denver's Warring Newspapers" (Jane B. Singer); "Newspaper Nonreadership: A Study of Motivations" (Gina M. Masullo); and "Untangling the Web: Teaching Students How to Use Online Resources and Critically Evaluate Information" (Stan Ketterer). Individual papers contain references. (RS)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

(80th, Chicago, Illinois, July 30-August 2, 1997):

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Reader-friendly journalism's lasting impact: A study of reporters and editors involved in Knight-Ridder's 25/43 Project

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Reader-friendly journalism's lasting impact: A study of reporters and editors involved in Knight-Ridder's 25/43 Project

Abstract

On Oct. 11, 1990, Knight-Ridder kicked off a grand journalistic experiment called the 25/43 Project at *The Boca Raton News*, a sleepy 25,000-circulation newspaper in South Florida. The company invested millions of dollars in a bold move to attract baby boomers to newspapers. This is a qualitative study of the attitudes of some of the journalists involved in the project. Today, many of the reporters involved in the 25/43 Project believe they damaged newspapers more than they helped them to survive. Many are predicting — at the very least — a smudged future for newspapers. "Newspapers, in attempting to redefine themselves, have destroyed themselves," says former reporter Phil Scruton. But one of the strategists of the 25/43 Project says some reporters never quite understood what the project was all about — and still don't. "It wasn't about them or Boca Raton — it was about finding ways for newspapers to connect to readers," says Mike Smith.

Reader-friendly journalism's lasting impact:
A study of reporters and editors involved in Knight-Ridder's 25/43 Project

Introduction

Many people think of wealthy socialites and gorgeous beaches at the mention of Boca Raton. But for journalists, visions of pink flamingos come to mind. On Oct. 11, 1990, Knight-Ridder's pink flamingo landed in Boca Raton and its flutterings are still felt throughout the journalism world. The impact of the grand journalistic experiment — called the 25/43 Project — is reflected in newspapers big and small across the nation.

The Boca Raton News, a sleepy 25,000-circulation newspaper, became the centerpiece of a multi-million-dollar experiment touted by its corporate parent, Knight-Ridder, as a bold move to attract baby boomers to newspapers. And the new colorful newspaper, emblazoned with a pink flamingo at the top and bursting with graphics, maps, charts, indexes and short stories, kicked off in grand style. Big bucks were spent on rollout parties for the staff and the community. No expense was spared on advertising — human billboards wandered the humid streets, banner-pulling planes buzzed the crowded beaches. "Have you seen the latest *News*?" seemed to shout from every corner, every TV.

For the journalists who put out the paper, called simply "*The News*," it was a mind-boggling, exciting time. The paper attracted the attention of not just the trade journals like *Columbia Journalism Review.* In-depth stories appeared in *The New York Times* and *Washington Post.* Newspapers as diverse as the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* did major features on the crazy paper in South Florida that never jumps a story to a different page. Even nationally syndicated columnist Russell Baker was writing about the 25/43 Project, the name Knight-Ridder conjured up to reflect the ages of the targeted audience.

The journalists who worked in Boca Raton — including the Knight-Ridder strategists who ran the show, others hired specifically to help produce the new and improved paper, and those employees already working there — were the envy of their peers. Or the butt of their jokes. On the one hand, the Boca Raton journalists were on the front lines in the battle for readers. In the battle to save newspapers. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that? But on the other hand, the Boca Raton journalists were accused by some in the national media of selling out. Of producing a lot of fluff, not substance. Of pandering.

So now, five years after the grand experiment began, and the money, large staff size and excitement of the project are nothing but a distant memory in the Boca Raton newsroom, how do the reporters who worked the front lines in Boca Raton feel about their legacy? Do they think they helped save the newspaper industry? Or do they believe they hastened newspapers' eventual death? And what are the attitudes of the project's directors? Do they believe they made an important and lasting impact? That is the subject of this study. The author was an assistant city editor of *The News* from October 1990 to November 1992.

Background and significance of study

The 25/43 Project was intended to appeal to readers too busy to read a newspaper. As implemented at *The News*, it offered short stories — major news stories were about one-third as long as before and none of them could "jump" to another page — extensive use of graphics, including locator maps on local, national and world news pages, a full-color weather map, and more positive news, including a daily "Today's Hero." Knight-Ridder spent at least $3 million on the project, which developed prototypes in Columbia, S.C., before moving to Florida. To gear the newspaper specifically to the South Florida audience, the project held as many as 30 focus groups (Benson 1992) with readers and advertisers, got more than 300 responses from readers of *The News* on what changes they would like in the paper, and hired a market research firm to survey Boca Raton, Delray Beach, Boynton Beach and Deerfield Beach residents about their reading habits and reaction to prototypes (Guy 1990). As Knight-Ridder President Tony Ridder described it, "What we decided was to make a new newspaper from the front page to the last. We tried to find out as much about the people of Boca Raton as possible, how they led their lives, what they were thinking, what they did, what interested them. And then we tried to design a paper we thought would work for them (Cosco 1991) ."

Mediaweek said of the results: "The reincarnated News takes *USA Today* several steps further. Boca's "readership-building redesign" borrowed heavily from McPaper's upbeat style, boosterish tone and bite-sized, "news-you-can-use" approach, but added new twists and emphasized local angles. What emerged is a reader-friendly community newspaper that seeks to grab you by the collar, guide you around, make you part of the experience (Cosco 1991)."

In a front-page story, the *Washington Post* described the new newspaper: "What the pink newspaper boxes here in Palm Beach County are serving up is a sort of smorgasbord of snippets, a newspaper that slices and dices the news into even smaller portions than does *USA Today*, spicing it with color graphics and fun facts and cute features like "Today's Hero" and "Critter Watch....Here amid the palm trees of south Florida, the newspaper doctors have performed radical surgery on an aging black-and-white patient. The full-color *Boca Raton News*, which made its debut in October, is packed with helpful reader hints, from an alphabetical index to each day's ads to little boxes that explain how to read stock tables (Kurtz 1991)."

The project's creators were enthusiastic. "It may be the first newspaper for the '90s," said Lou Heldman, who was director of the project (Guy 1990). After initial reader survey results came in, Bill Baker, then-vice president for news for Knight-Ridder, said, "We know the satisfaction is good, and now we are watching to see whether it makes people read and buy (Jones 1991)." Wayne Ezell, then-editor of *The News*, said, "The research and conversations we've had with readers make it so clear newspapers have to change. It's not a close call (Guy 1990)."

Critics of the project, however, were plentiful. For instance, *Los Angeles Times* media critic David Shaw said *The News* was not his idea of what a newspaper should be. "The Boca Raton paper and *USA Today* attempt to emulate television, rather than make themselves more distinctive from television," says Shaw. "I think that what we (newspapers) do best are long, thorough, careful, analytical looks at serious problems. That's something television can't do. The more we go for emphasis on color and graphics and short stories, seems to me the more we are going to ultimately render ourselves unnecessary to our readers (Benson 1992)."

Yet there were defenders as well. Bill Winter, president and executive director of the American Press Institute, said there was a need for the market-driven, reader-friendly approach of newspapers like *The News*. "What I fear is that, in their disdain for the so-called `market-driven' approaches to news gathering and presentation, traditionalists would choke off risk-taking, trial-and-error with new and creative methods of writing, reporting and editing, and development of new kinds of deep and lasting connections between individual newsrooms and the communities they aspire to reflect. I have, in short, a recurring nightmare that newspapers will go the way of the railroads (Winter 1992)."

The 25/43 Project's results were mixed. Readers liked it but circulation figures did not rise much. One survey of readers in April 1991, for instance, showed enthusiasm for the new look and content. The survey by Simmons Market Research Bureau found: 94% of baby boomers said they liked the idea of keeping a story to one page; 95% liked the many charts; 87% liked the maps; 99% liked the design, which puts the same kinds of news and features in the same place every day. (Guy 1991). Paid circulation, however, never really went up much, hovering around 25,000 (Editor & Publisher Yearbook 1993).

Although its impact in Boca Raton was relatively minor during its year of intense efforts, the project had greater long-lasting impact on the journalism community at large. Many newspapers, particularly Knight-Ridder ones, borrowed from it (Benson 1992) (Cosco 1991) (Garneau 1992). The debate over its significance continues today in newsrooms and in schools of journalism, in books and the mass media. Howard Kurtz, media critic for the Washington Post, writes in his book, *Media Circus: The Trouble with America's Newspapers*, that one cause of newspaper mortality is "Pink Flamingo Journalism." Newspaper editors that follow the lead of newspapers like *The News* will not save newspapers, he says. "But those who insist on shrinking the news into ever-smaller digests will eventually digest themselves out of existence (Zerbisias 1993)."

Management consultant Tom Peters said newspapers are boring and too often follow the lead of television, losing their identity and distinction. "When the product starts to look precisely like what's on the television screen, don't be surprised if people watch the television screen," he told newspaper publishers in 1994. "Ever since we went totally bonkers in this country . . . on market research and focus groups, we have ended up with one automobile that looks like every other damned automobile, one bathtub that looks like every other bathtub," he said. "Higher quality, more efficient, but it ain't very interesting (Jones 1994)."

While the 25/43 Project may be history now, the reason for its genesis continues: Newspapers still are struggling to attract and keep readers.

Figures released in October, 1995, show that newspaper circulation continues to decline — down 1 percent from a year earlier. Among the country's largest daily newspapers to lose circulation were: *The Wall Street Journal*, down 1 percent from the same period last year, *The New York Times*, down 2.9 percent, and the *Los Angeles Times*, down 4.7 percent (Sacharow 1995). Also in 1995, three of the United States' most venerable dailies closed: the *Houston Post*, the *Baltimore Evening Sun* and *New York Newsday*. Newspapers merged in Milwaukee. Newsroom staffs merged in Indianapolis. The list goes on. The average number of people who bought a daily newspaper in 1970, when America's population was 203 million, was 62 million. Today, with the country's population at 260 million, the newspaper-buying figure is 59 million (Carlin 1995).

With the fade-out of the 25/43 Project, the newspaper industry didn't end its attempt to boost circulation. In fact, newspapers today are experimenting more than ever. The *Sun-Sentinel* in Fort Lauderdale has its reporters report for the entire paper, not just for a department. A number of newspapers, including the *Albuquerque Tribune*, have formed teams of reporters and editors (Koenninger 1993). One of the more ambitious projects is at the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, which is reorganizing everything from its corporate and newsroom structures to the look of its pages.

"The *Star Tribune* has dived into just about every experiment being tried by any newspaper, anywhere. The paper is dividing its reporters into teams; trying "employee empowerment" techniques to get journalists involved in decision making; using focus groups to measure what readers want; experimenting with "interactivity," and redesigning the paper to be more reader-friendly (Glaberson 1995)." Publisher Joel R. Kramer said he is searching for new solutions to the problems that daily newspapers across the country face. "My No. 1 goal is to keep the institution of metropolitan journalism healthy and financially viable so it can continue to be done," he said (Glaberson 1995).

A study presented in 1995 to the American Society of Newspaper Editors urged newspapers to redesign their pages, run shorter stories and focus on substantive issues to attract younger adults who are no longer reading newspapers. "There is strong evidence that newspapers need to change dramatically if they want to attract readers," said Kristin McGrath of MORI Research, a Minneapolis-based firm that completed the study. Newspapers, she said, need to focus on their strengths — providing local news as well as lists, maps and calendars (Castaneda 1995). In many ways, that is what the 25/43 Project and *The News* were all about.

Related studies

Much has been written about the impact of changes in organizations. For instance, one study argued that any change must be accompanied by attempts to overcome resistance to it. Employees who receive ample information in a timely and appropriate fashion and who had a high need for achievement were willing to participate in an organizational change (Miller, Johnson & Grau 1994).

Executives must learn to manage organizational change in new ways because change is occurring so rapidly in businesses in the 1990s, according to one management expert. First, management must make employees aware of coming changes. Then, employees need to become aware of the benefits of the changes for the company and themselves. And, last, employees must remain open to further change. Important steps in the change process include: opening communication channels, creating visionaries, developing a learning environment, providing training and establishing a team approach (Goldberg 1992).

In the newsroom setting, a study found that journalists at two newspapers almost universally said that their participation in decision making improves the work environment. Many of the journalists complained about the papers' reluctance to change, preference for stodginess over innovation, and hesitancy to make waves in the community (Gaziano & Coulson 1988).

The *Seattle Times* found that participatory management helped improve communication and quality work output. "That shift created new opportunities for people to contribute and exercise power. It meant that new people could win without other people losing. Simply put, it created room for diversity that otherwise might have been hard to find (MacLeod 1993)."

Robert H. Giles, editor of the *Detroit News*, said the relentless forces of change will shape trends in newspaper management throughout the 1990s. Newspaper managers must focus on the art of continuous improvement, of keeping people competent. "The challenge is especially critical in newsrooms. Reporters and editors are dealing with news subjects of increasing complexity and with sources who are increasingly sophisticated and knowledgeable (Giles 1993)."

Another editor, Tim McGuire of the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, said change is inevitable on three fronts: society, technology and the marketplace. Building a better content, a better designed paper and a better organizational structure will help meet those challenges. "We've been listening and researching a lot lately and I'm here to tell you this elitist belief that reader focus means short stories, fluffy stories and tabloid journalism is flat wrong. Sure readers want entertainment and sure readers want to read about Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan. But they want to read it because it tells a fascinating story about good and evil, about corruption, about the human spirit, about the weird human psyche and that's the story we need to tell (McGuire 1994)."

Change-consultant Doug Wesley urged editors to focus on the emotions of the journalists involved in change, helping them to work through their emotions and the process. Employees need a lot of support and training to deal with change (Picone 1994).

The changing nature of journalism also appears to have had an effect on journalists themselves. Numerous surveys have found increasing dissatisfaction among journalists. In a 1992 survey of 1,400 journalists, more than 20 percent of them said they planned to leave the field within five years — twice as many as in 1982-83. "This is tied to a significant decline in job satisfaction, with complaints about pay and the need for a different challenge leading the list of major reasons for plans to leave journalism (Weaver & Wilhoit 1992)."

Most journalists rated their newsroom's performance as very good or outstanding, but significantly fewer see outstanding performance than a decade ago. Journalists said comprehensive coverage, highly motivated staff attuned to the needs of their audience, and an opportunity for analysis and interpretation are important ingredients of a good newsroom (Weaver & Wilhoit 1996).

Another survey by the Associated Press Managing Editors association found that about 44 percent of journalists surveyed would like to be at a different paper in the next year, with nearly two-thirds of those aged 18-34 wanting to leave their jobs. Some said they are alienated by trendy, reader-friendly newspapers. Other reasons included: declining newspaper quality, poor salaries and lack of management focus (Rockmore 1994).

Methods

This study relies on qualitative research methods, particularly the interview. Interviews are considered one of the post powerful methods in the "qualitative armory (McCracken 1988)." The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the reporters ample opportunity to provide their thoughts and opinions. It also allows for much interpretation — a need recognized by many social scientists. This interpretive approach to social science is a strong tool for explaining phenomenon (Taylor 1985) (Geertz 1980).

Eleven reporters — including two who still work at *The News* — were interviewed or asked questions for this study by telephone, e-mail and fax in the fall of 1995. The researcher initially had set a goal of 10 reporters. The sample of 11 is roughly half the number of reporters working in news, business and features at *The News* at any given time during the project. Editors were specifically excluded from the study for a number of reasons, including the fact that their views have been detailed in many other articles about the project. This is the first study focused on the reporters. Reporters were tracked down through the researcher's own list of telephone numbers, as well as through other reporters, the respondents' friends and, in one case, a respondent's mother. Some reporters were unreachable — one is somewhere in Australia, another sails boats for a living. Others could not be tracked down. Only one person contacted did not answer the questions, because she was leaving on vacation. The researcher tried to get a mixture of backgrounds and experience into the study. The sample includes persons who still work for newspapers and those who have left the field. Only two of the sample still work at *The News* — only a handful of reporters from that era remain at *The News*. The researcher is confident the group is representative of the reporters who worked at *The Boca Raton News* during the project's heyday in 1990 and 1991.

Those who participated in this study are:

* Kate McClare, who remains a feature writer for *The News*. She started there as a police reporter in 1984, and became a feature writer in 1990.

* Dan DeVise, an education writer for the *Press-Telegram* of Long Beach, Calif. He started at *The News* as a business writer in October 1990 and left for his present job in October 1992.

* Phil Scruton, who now works for a family accounting and tax business in Boca Raton. He started at *The News* at the end of 1990 and stayed three years before leaving for his current position. He covered education for *The News*.

* Bill Orlove, a legislative assistant for a Florida state representative. He started at *The News* in May 1989 and worked there until March 1993. He primarily covered the legal system.

* John Singh, communications representative at Disney Consumer Products in California.

He worked at *The News* from October 1990 to June 1992. He primarily covered local government. He received a masters degree in communications management from University of Southern California after he left *The News*.

* Melissa Vickers Labayog, is a Kiplinger Fellow at Ohio State University. She started at *The News* in January of 1991 and covered the police beat. She stayed two years. She worked at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* before accepting her present position.

* Skip Sheffield, who remains an arts and entertainment writer for *The News*. He has been writing full-time for *The News* since 1978.

* Bill DiPaolo, who is now free-lancing in Fort Wayne, Ind. He started at *The News* in December 1990 as a general assignment reporter and stayed at *The News* for four years until his position as an editorial writer was eliminated.

* Brad Sultan, advocacy coordinator for the Tobacco-Free Florida coalition. He worked as a general assignment reporter at *The News* from June 1991 to December 1992.

* Ellie Lingner, a columnist for the *Palm Beach Post*. She had worked for *The News* on a freelance basis for many years, and after the project ended became features editor..

* Sharon Geltner, manager of communications for Achievers Unlimited, a nutritional supplement company in West Palm Beach. She worked at *The News* from May 1990 to June 1992.

The telephone interviews were semi-structured, working off a base of eight questions. But the conversations tended to go off onto many tangents. A variation of those questions were faxed to one person, Sharon Geltner, and e-mailed to two people, John Singh and Ellie Lingner.

After the reporters were interviewed and an early draft of this paper was completed, the author interviewed by telephone several people in the spring of 1996 to get their reactions to the findings. Those people are:

* Mike Smith, former deputy director of the project and current associate director of the Newspaper Management Center at Northwestern University and a consulting editor for Knight-

Ridder.

* Virginia Dodge Fielder, Knight-Ridder's vice president of research and head of the Newspaper Association of America's Newspaper Research Division.

* Lou Heldman, who was project director and is the current publisher of Knight-Ridder's *Centre Daily Times* in State College, Penn.

* John Morton, a newspaper industry analyst for Wall Street.

* Doug Underwood, associate professor of communications at the University of Washington.

Findings

Nobody in the journalism world is predicting a bright future for newspapers these days. And the reporters who were among the most committed to finding a solution —those who worked at *The News* — don't seem too optimistic, either. In fact, many say that the newspapers that try too hard to win over readers may be the ones destined to fail. "Newspapers that pander to readers will fade out," says Phil Scruton. "The newspapers that survive will be the good, quality publications."

Scruton is one of the more negative of the former staff. He describes the entire project as a cynical attempt to appeal to people who don't — and never will — read newspapers. "Newspapers, in attempting to redefine themselves, have destroyed themselves," he says. *The News*, he says, made compromises that made it irrelevant to many readers. Instead of pandering to readers, newspapers need to accept the fact they will never again be the dominant outlet for news. "Newspapers were better being a step behind."

Scruton is not alone in his feelings. John Singh says the project was doomed to fail from the start. "The journalism industry in general seems to be laboring under the impression that its product needs improvement, when perhaps it does not. Color, lots of photos, glitzy layouts, increased font size, and the like — all the things that made the flamingo pink, in other words — are rather feeble attempts at avoiding the real issue, which is that newspapers are losing readership and are not going to get it back."

Increased competition for the newspaper audience is just one of the concerns of Sharon Geltner, who describes the outlook for newspapers as "pretty grim." The threat to newspapers comes not just from direct competition from TV, cable, video and the Internet, she says. "There is also a struggle for talented, bright, ambitious labor. Once the print side is no longer seen as a glamorous industry, publishers will find it harder to get a willing labor pool to work for slave wages. The print industry is less glamorous and matters less every year. It appears right now it's still attracting young, hungry, intelligent people — some of them — but there are probably fewer people like that applying for print jobs every year, as other kinds of media gain more dominance."

Good journalists, Scruton says, also are leaving the field because they don't get the chance to inspire readers with fact-finding and exposes. Instead, he says, they are told to pander to their readers. The journalists who remain, Scruton says, accept the new style of newspapering. "Becoming a convert to the Boca style is a survival mechanism. If you want to be a journalist these days, you have to adapt."

Skip Sheffield says he "quakes" for the future of newspaper journalism. As newspapers cut back, they give readers less incentive to read. "It's kind of a vicious circle." The quality of journalism continues to drop, he says. "The emphasis isn't so much on quality as on doing it cheaply and quickly — hoping there's not too many mistakes."

The trend toward shorter stories, more color and graphics, is inevitable in the world of newspapers, says Brad Sultan. Newspapers like the *Chicago Tribune*, he says, have gone the same route. "I think The Boca News was ahead of its time. It was like a harbinger of things to come," Sultan says, adding he doesn't know if that's good or bad. "I think there will always be newspapers, but they're not going to be like they were in their heyday. I wish things were different. I wish people cared about their newspaper. I wish it were 1956 and New York had 20 newspapers."

Dan Devise says the smart newspapers will continue to produce quality journalism — avoiding what he calls a "faddish" attempt to appeal to a low level of sophistication and comprehension. "I don't think that by dumbing down the product and converting it into easily digestible nuggets that we are ever going to win back the people getting their news from television." The problem with the 25/43 Project, he says, was that so many of the stories became too short and too superficial. "I really think we owe it to people to let them decide when they want to stop reading."

Elite newspapers will continue to produce quality journalism, says Melissa Vickers Labayog. While newspapers will have to adapt and face the competition, the good ones that continue to appeal to readers and focus on their communities will survive. "A lot of newspapers today tend to ignore what's going on in their community. Nobody's going to buy the paper just because you have one."

Despite all the negativity about the future of journalism, everyone who participated in this study says the 25/43 Project was something that had to be done and they were glad to have been a part of it.

"I've been critical of the project and very critical of some of the people who helped lead the project, but at least we tried something different," says Kate McClare. The project, she says, helped the newspaper industry — known to be reluctant to new ideas — go through some necessary changes. "It was good in shaking people up."

Nearly everyone describes the newspaper as an exciting place to be at the time of the project. "I thought it was exciting as hell," says Bill DiPaolo. "It was a gutsy place. I look back at it now and I was thrilled to be a part of it. People are still yakking about it."

Even some of the more cynical members of the staff don't have regrets. "Believe it or not, I did enjoy the experience," says Singh. "If anything, working on the project helped me understand why there's very little future for newspapers! It also has made me grateful every day for three years that I'm no longer part of it!"

Scruton adds: "It was exciting. I felt like I was doing something important."

Whether the reporters involved in the project think it was good for journalism or not, they continue to find the techniques and skills acquired useful in their journalistic or other careers.

Singh says he uses the concepts in his role as a managing editor for a publication. "I do still tend to write short and to look for 'non-traditional' material for use in sidebars — numbers, figures, etc. Interestingly, in the issue we just completed, two stories jumped a few pages ahead. I got very little feedback on this magazine, but a couple of people who did bother to call or e-mail said, 'I didn't like the way those stories were continued on another page...' "

DeVise says he considers the integration of text, art and headline much more than other reporters at his current newspaper. He also writes shorter. "I almost never fight for more space. I'm really one of the very few people in the office (of the *Press-Telegram*) who can say that."

When Vickers Labayog started at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, she realized how much she had learned at *The News* about the importance of have good graphics, photographs and a complete package. "To me it was the normal thing to do," she says, recalling that in Honolulu that line of thinking was out of the ordinary.

Sultan speaks for nearly all of the reporters in acknowledging the benefits of a crisp writing style that was encouraged at *The News*. "It made me a better writer. I learned to write shorter. That has helped me in every other job I've had."

Even the cynical Scruton says his writing improved. "It was a very good thing for me — the need to write tightly, to form an interesting lead, to write within the no-jump format. My writing needed that discipline," he says, adding that he continues to use the skills while he dabbles in fiction-writing. "I'm a tighter writer than I used to be."

The skills aren't relegated to writing and packaging techniques, either. Scruton says the experience has modified his view of government. Because he needed to determine the bare essentials for his short stories, he now finds that he has a better perception of all the "bull" that is part of government. Any newspaper article, he says, carries more significance to him as a citizen.

"I can read between the lines much more effectively."

A few reporters, however, don't think what the project did was all so special. "They made a real science out of something (journalists) have been doing for years," McClare says.

Geltner adds, "I loved its ideals about covering micro-local issues, writing snappy, getting to the point immediately, being clear and concise, getting personal, etc., but this probably was part of traditional journalism, was forgotten and now seems new again."

Lessons from the project

What do the reporters think other newspapers can learn from the experience at *The News*?

The most common theme concerned how the project ended. As money from Knight-Ridder dried up, positions weren't filled. Newspapers, the reporters say, need to stick with projects and ensure newsrooms are adequately staffed.

The two reporters in this study who still work at *The News* are perhaps the most critical of all. Sheffield calls the current newsroom staff a "skeleton crew." Although he knew the project was temporary, he says, "I had no idea it would be scaled back to what it is." McClare says the newspaper continued to try to keep to high standards even as the newsroom staff was being cut back. That may have had a negative impact on newspaper journalism, she says, by demonstrating to newspaper executives that, "Gee, you can put out this great product with so few people." She recalls one Knight-Ridder executive who came through the newsroom who was amazed there were so few people who worked there.

Orlove says the frustration associated with diminishing resources was a partial reason for him leaving *The News*. "We were raised to a different standard, then were told to stay at that level with fewer resources and staff," he says. He calls the experience "disheartening." As people left, he says, "the rest of the staff was kind of left holding the new bag, so to speak."

Ellie Lingner says, "I believe the biggest lesson is that you don't `try something new' for one year and then pull the plug. That's not long enough."

Several reporters are critical of the way the project had too many editors. "A lesson from the project would be to hire less management and more reporters," says Geltner. "It appeared the project was top heavy with high-priced consultants, editors with overlapping responsibilities, etc. This caused much resentment among the existing poorly-paid staff. Probably more immediate positive results would have been seen in the newsroom and throughout the community with better and increased coverage, rather than more company memos, meetings on ethnic diversity, etc."

DiPaolo says there were just too many editors, and that intimidated some reporters. "One editor would say a story was too blue, another would say it was too green — there were too many chiefs." He adds, "There was a real hierarchy that got frustrating at times." The editors, he says, didn't seem to want to compromise. "There was a real `I'm an editor and you're not and that's the name of that tune' attitude."

Devise says he questions the logic of trying to appeal to people who get their news from television — those people probably can't be won back. "We set out to design a newspaper for people who don't read the newspaper; that's like developing a TV show for people who don't have their televisions on."

Other lessons, according to the reporters, include:

* The project needed more emphasis on training, specifically on how to write good, short stories. Singh says the reporters were frustrated because they were never trained or coached. "Writing a 25-inch story in seven inches is something that takes quite a bit of flair..."

* Focus groups were too heavily relied upon. "Twenty-five people should not be able to set the agenda for the whole paper," says Vickers Labayog. Sheffield says the project tried to rely on consensus too much, which came in an "endless" series of focus groups. "People are not always sure what they want. Sometimes they need to be led a little bit."

* Pay reporters more money. Singh says the project suffered from one of the major problems in journalism: "Too few people without enough experience working too many hours for too little pay. I've never quite been able to figure out just why the journalism industry has such

atrocious pay scales. Seems to me that if you want to improve your product you've got to find the right people to do it. You're not going to find the right people at $19,000 or $20,000 a year. The reporters on the 25/43 Project were undertrained, underexperienced and underenthusiastic."

Editors, others react

One of the strategists of the 25/43 Project says some reporters never quite understood what the project was all about — and still don't. "It wasn't about them or Boca Raton — it was about finding ways for newspapers to connect to readers," says Mike Smith.

Smith, former deputy director of the project and current associate director of the Newspaper Management Center at Northwestern University and a consulting editor for Knight-Ridder, says he disagrees with the premise of reporters that short stories or many graphics "dumbs down" a newspaper. Sophisticated design doesn't mean unsophisticated content, he says. Redundancy and lack of thoughtful editing, Smith says, is what dumbs down a newspaper. Newspapers benefit by anything that is done to help people connect with issues and comprehend them, he says. Readers of *The News* liked the changes made by the project, he says, and they placed a high value on the newspaper's content.

Smith says the project had a huge immediate impact because the "newspaper industry was so hungry for easy answers." The impact on Knight-Ridder newspapers has been more long-lasting, he says. Knight-Ridder recognizes the project contained just part the solution to attracting and keeping readers. Smith says he is "bullish" about the future of newspapers. Newspapers are attracting younger readers and more female readers. They also are entrepreneurial and are utilizing new technologies, he says. His two-year assignment at *The News* helped Smith focus on the need and urgency for change in the newspaper industry, he says.

Virginia Dodge Fielder, Knight-Ridder's vice president of research and head of the Newspaper Association of America's Newspaper Research Division, says newspapers today listen to their readers much more closely and address their needs better than ever. The estimated $3 million cost "was well worth it to learn the lesson of how best to incorporate reader views into the way we edit our newspapers everyday," she says. " How do you measure the worth of being a pioneer? You do it from the perspective of time."

The project, she says, helped Knight-Ridder learn about the process of listening to readers and understanding the market — "what we can do to solidify the relationship readers have with their newspaper."

Lou Heldman, who was project director and is the current publisher of Knight-Ridder's *Centre Daily Times* in State College, Penn., says newspapers now have "a process of intense listening to readers about what's important in their lives." That wasn't the case ten years ago, he says, and the 25/43 Project played a major role in that change.

John Morton, a newspaper industry analyst for Wall Street, says the 25/43 Project helped spark the growing dependence on focus groups. While focus groups have become more prominent in the past five years, he says, journalists still should make decisions the old-fashioned way. "I think the way to bring readers into the newspaper is to put stuff in there they want to read," he says.

Doug Underwood, associate professor of communications at the University of Washington, says he is dubious of the value of the 25/43 Project. "On its own terms, it wasn't much of a groundbreaking experiment. The techniques used at Boca Raton — the strong emphasis on graphics, readability, and brief copy; the use of focus groups and reader-oriented techniques; the snazzy layout and design — were hardly unique to the newspaper industry when it was tried at Boca Raton." Underwood, who's the author of *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom : How the Marketers and Managers are Reshaping Today's Media* , says there was little *The News* was doing that hadn't already been done by *USA Today*. And a number of newspaper companies, including Lee Enterprises, Freedom Communications and Southam Newspapers, had already been making their newspapers more reader-driven on a local level. "In fact, by the time the Boca Raton experiment was unveiled, there were already indications that the adaption of these reader-oriented techniques wasn't doing much of anything to help newspaper circulation or the bottom-line," he says.

Underwood says another problem was that many journalists — at least at the reporter level — "find this sort of newspapering distasteful." He adds, "And it didn't do much for the stature of a company like Knight-Ridder which had built its reputation in places like Philadelphia, Miami, and Detroit on the philosophy that better journalism is what sells newspapers."

Fielder says, however, that quality journalism has always been a fundamental underpinning of what Knight-Ridder does and always will be. The emphasis in the 25/43 Project always was on substance, but with a bit more style. "You have to have both of these things — style and substance."

Conclusion and recommendations

This study looked at a small group of newspaper reporters who were involved with a very big project. It looked at how the reporters interpreted the 25/43 Project at *The Boca Raton News* and their roles in it.

The 25/43 Project had many effects on the reporters involved. While it gave them the opportunity to explore new ways of doing things, they saw that some of the new ways had nothing to do with good, solid journalism. While they appreciate the need to attract and hold readers with concise, compelling, interesting writing, they are convinced that many newspapers today are going too far in trying to jazz up their news pages. Those newspapers that are going for the glitter and the glitz at the expense of quality journalism will not last. They see a need for in-depth reporting and special projects. They believe readers will continue reading a long story if it's well-written and interesting. Newspapers that don't put quality journalism first will be the ones that fail.

The project has had a lasting impact on many of the reporters involved. They recognize the need to write shorter. They recognize that a successful story is one that reaches the readers, and that takes coordinated efforts between photographers, graphics creators, page designers, headline writers and the reporter. Some of the reporters are more committed than ever in trying to write with the reader in mind. Yet some of the reporters were turned off by the new style of journalism; it made them question their role as journalists.

As for the author of this study, he falls somewhere in-between. The 25/43 Project undoubtedly injected new life into newspaper journalism at the time. People began intensely discussing the future of newspapers in and out of newsrooms. A lot of the ideas involved with the project were good ones. The people associated with the project were creative, talented journalists. Many newspapers around the country have borrowed liberally from the project. And in many ways, readers are being better served by newspapers. But it has come at a cost. Many newspapers overemphasize style over substance. They don't commit the resources needed for a newspaper to play its proper watchdog role in society. Newspapers are often too timid to expose incompetence in government or corrupt business practices; they don't protect consumers, cry out for the underdog, raise a little hell. They're too busy writing about goofy gadgets on sale at the mall. Or about pets who look like their owners. Sure, there's room for light features — as long as it doesn't come at the expense of substantive issues.

This study should not discourage newspaper editors from trying new ways to better serve their readers and potential readers. But it should caution newspaper editors who are considering making their product more reader-friendly to put quality journalism first. Don't give up on the bread-and-butter coverage of crime and courts, government and business, education and the environment. Instead, try to figure out ways to improve coverage in these and other areas. Newspapers considering major changes need to pay close attention to staff needs, such as more recognition, better pay and adequate resources over a long-term period. They need to provide comprehensive training. They need to have open communication lines with the staff. And they need to provide reporters with the freedom and encouragement to do what they are paid to do: tell a story the best way they can.

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An analysis of online sites produced by U.S. newspapers: Are the critics right?

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Abstract

A content analysis of 83 sites produced by U.S. newspapers was conducted to examine whether criticism directed at the industry for failing to adapt to new technology is well-founded. The research shows online newspapers making strides in placement of news and reader interaction. Online papers are not doing as well adapting to the digital environment in news content and presentation of news. Sites produced by large newspapers appear closer to the critics' "ideal" than small newspapers.

Introduction

The much-hyped digital revolution is upon us. About 14% of U.S. households are reported to be accessing the Internet (Levins, 1997), and it is estimated that by the year 2000, 50% of U.S. homes will have online access (Cohen, 1996). Mass media outlets are rushing to secure their future in this new digital age, and newspapers are no exception. The industry is rapidly creating a presence on the Internet. The onset of 1994 saw only 20 online newspapers. By early 1996, that number had grown to about 900, with about 450 operating in the United States alone (Outing, 1996). In January 1997, nearly 1,600 online newspapers were being published worldwide, including 820 U.S. products (Levins, 1997). However, many newspapers are entering the fray with no clear reason other than to simply create an online presence. Critics charge that an online presence alone will not draw the audience these ventures need to be successful. Noack (1997) argues that the new medium requires that newspaper Web pages be treated differently in terms of length of stories and other content characteristics. Too many of the hundreds of newspaper sites on the Web, he contends, "add up to little more than static boards displaying weather, tourist and civic information, or telephone numbers of editors at the newspaper" (32I).

The question confronting online newspapers is how to reinvent the print industry's conventions and practices to produce an entertaining, informative, and useful online product for consumers. While newspapers scurry to put their products on the World Wide Web and other online formats, critics and industry observers outline how online newspapers should look and what services they should include. Little systematic research has emerged to date describing what the world of online newspapers looks like. This paper aims to fill that gap through a content analysis of online publications being produced by U.S. newspapers.

First, the views of critics and industry observers are reviewed. Because the online industry is still in the process of defining itself and academic research on what makes an "ideal" online newspaper is in its infancy, critics' views are used as baseline parameters for what makes a good online news product. While no one yet knows with certainty what the ideal online newspaper will look like, critic's views are used in this study as a measuring stick by which to gauge what the nation's online newspapers currently look like. Next, to see whether these criticisms and observations are valid, a study of 83 online newspapers is detailed. The paper concludes with a discussion about whether current criticisms of the industry are accurate and fair and offers suggestions for further research on online newspaper content and services.

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Literature review

The Internet and the birth of online newspapers presents the news industry with the challenge of discovering the best ways to communicate in the new medium. To be successful, news professionals must first find the forms of communication that work online. Simply reproducing the print newspaper online will not work because of the constraints of using a computer. The small screen size of computers make them inhospitable to long text stories (Fitzgerald, 1996), and hypertext jumps make it easy for users to get lost and therefore click out of a site. In a 1995 study of the San Jose *Mercury-News'* online edition, Mueller and Kamerer found that while readers saw the online paper as a useful tool, it was no substitute for a printed newspaper. Subjects found the new medium unappealing leisurely browsing, inappropriate for all news material, uncomfortable to travel through, and more difficult to read than traditional newspapers (Mueller & Kamerer, 1995). Analysts identify five areas on which newspapers must concentrate when going digital: Structure, content, news writing, reader interaction, and user services.

Structure

Online newspapers have drawn criticism for not creatively rethinking new formats for news delivery. Most critics blast newspapers just reproducing the print product online (Katz, 1994, Reason 1995a, Pogash 1996, Lasica 1996a, 1996d, 1996e, 1996f). Regan (1995) argues:

> Simply sticking your content – or shovelware – on a Web site just doesn't cut it any more. With the tsunami of newspapers flooding the Internet, the need to differentiate yourself is crucial (p. 78).

Katz (1994) maintains that online experiences are fundamentally different from the functions of traditional newspapers. The online environment has much less organization and predictability. Readers feel their way through it, never quite sure where they will be led. Peggie Stark Adam, a Poynter associate in visual journalism, calls for publishers not to be overwhelmed by the technology and simply dump their print versions onto Web sites, but to think creatively and holistically through the development, creation, and delivery of information (Reason, 1995a).

So what changes should be made? Mike Gordon, director of Access Atlanta, advises editors to design a shallow structure online by offering news on the first available screen. Gordon says online readers are reluctant to click through several screens to find news content, therefore news should be as close to the first available screen as possible (Reason, 1995d). Dominique Noth, an Internet consultant for media, also advocates a shallow structure. Many papers make readers delve three to four levels into the site to find news. This is time consuming and may cause users to get "lost" before they find the information they are looking for (Noth, 1996b). San

Jose's *Mercury Center*, in contrast, was the first online newspaper to offer a shallow structure. Bruce Koon, the managing editor of the *Mercury Center*, says this immediacy was key in capturing users (Reason, 1995b).

Content

Traditionally, news has been categorized as local, national, or international. Because the World Wide Web eliminates the geographic barriers that come with distributing a timely print product, online newspapers are grappling with what content they will carry. Many online newspapers feel they should continue to provide geographically "local" news. Others, such as the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, think the Internet represents an opportunity for online newspapers to redefine "local," arguing that local content is news of interest to like-minded people. Communities and localities can now be thought of as interest groups. For example, bicycle news would be "local" to bicycle enthusiasts world-wide (RTNDF, 1996).

Some strongly contend that online newspapers should, like print papers, produce national news. Susan Mernit, editor of New Jersey Online, argues that online publications should deliver national news—but with a local spin. Mernit says difficulty arises when consumers expect the news to be up-to-the-minute. This push for timeliness means that every online paper will have the same stories from the same sources, usually a wire service like the *Associated Press* (Cohen, 1996). Many online papers now offer one or more automated wire services for national news (Reason, 1995d). Noth (1996b) also is critical of many online papers for simply reproducing AP stories on their sites and calls for online papers to individualize their stories and create their own local spin on national events.

Writing style and the look of news

Just what constitutes a news story in the online environment? Although no dominant model has emerged, new media allows for experimentation with writing style and the incorporation of various media elements. NandO.net's director, Rafael Bonnelly, asserts that the inverted pyramid style of writing will continue to be the most important model but may be modified for online use. Online journalists may write in multiple inverted pyramids, or what Kevin McKenna, director of The New York Times Electronic Media, calls "serial storytelling." Reporters will have to tell their stories in 400- to 500-word installments. This form of storytelling fits the medium because the computer screen is inhospitable to long stories; a 10-inch column seems endless on a computer screen (Fitzgerald, 1996). Ruth Gersh, editor of multimedia at the *Associated Press*, sees the broadcast model fitting the medium. Gersh advises online newspapers to use attribution first, keep

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the sections of the story short, and repeat attribution because it takes too much effort to go back a page online (Fitzgerald, 1996). In a 1996 discussion on the LISTSERV JOURNET, several journalism educators and professionals agreed with Gersh's expectation of the broadcast style emerging as the dominant writing style online because of the use of the present tense, short sentences, simple language, and direct sentence structure (Franklin, Grow, Hamlett, Herbert, Sands, & Weispfenning, 1996). However, others argued that broadcast style is too terse and defend the viability of longer, more substantial novella-length writing on the Internet. They believe the power of the written word is compelling enough to capture the attention of the audience, even for several screens (Franklin, et al., 1996).

The changing face of news will go beyond writing style. The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation experts see news reports combining multiple media elements;

text, sound, still images, animation, and video (RTNDF, 1996). Mark Fitzgerald, *Editor & Publisher's* Midwest editor also envisions a story as a mix of text, sound, video, and graphics (Fitzgerald, 1996). San Jose's Koon agrees that online newspaper reports will mix various mediums and predicts a challenge in finding reporters who are able to successfully collect audio and video materials (Reason, 1995b). The *St. Petersburg Times* and the *Boston Globe,* for example, are experimenting with the new forms of storytelling by creating environments in which users can experience the stories for themselves. *St. Petersburg Times* Interactive provides a virtual museum that guides users through images and stories from a local museum exhibit, while *Boston Globe* Online features a virtual tour of Massachusetts (Cohen, 1996). Rochelle Lavin, online editor of the *St. Petersburg Times* Interactive, calls this journalism at a different level; it combines text with audio, video, and graphics (Reason, 1995c).

Regan (1995) calls for online papers to link stories with audio, video, chat groups, and other sites to build an interactive community around each important story.

Lasica (1996c) contends that readers do not want newspapers to use flashy multimedia effects; rather readers want multimedia efforts to enable more reader interaction with stories. Susan Mernit likes new multimedia applications, such as Java and Shockwave, as ways to enhance news stories, but she contends they are currently not successful because of incompatibility with many Web browsers. When these multimedia services become compatible with all Web browsers, they will enable the paper to be more easily navigable and aesthetically pleasing, as well as enhancing storytelling (Cohen, 1996).

User interaction

Interactivity can allow readers to become active participants in the creation of news content. Analysts say online newspapers are not producing sites that are truly interactive. Currently, if a site offers the user a set of choices with predetermined results, it is called interactive. But true interactivity allows readers to become participants in the creation of the news (Noth, 1996d). Katz (1994) argues that the majority of online newspapers simply post their print stories online, offering some graphics but no e-mail addresses or other attempts at interactivity. The online news is decided by editors, not through discourse with the readers. To promote interaction online, analysts recommend including e-mail addresses with columns and stories and providing and interacting with online discussion forums.

In his analysis of *The New York Times'* Web site, Noth (1996a) praises the online forums and discussion areas on the Web site. Noth hopes the paper will respond to the posts it receives, saying forums offer the opportunity for active participation, encourage a dialogue with the readers and help the paper deliver news of genuine interest to readers (Noth, 1996a). Budde (1996) reports that *The Wall Street Journal* receives voluminous e-mail, which is filtered by editors and sometimes incorporated into the newspaper's content. But Lasica (1996b) criticizes most other online papers for not providing e-mail addresses and for the lack of response to issues raised by readers in the papers' electronic forums. Feedback is a good way of monitoring reader interest; articles that receive many responses are given follow-up columns. User interaction also builds an online community that could help retain online readers (Lasica, 1996b). Finally, interactivity fosters a more involved staff (Regan, 1995). One columnist, who provides her e-mail online and in the printed paper, calls interaction with readers fun. “Sort of like those childhood days when we used to string two cans together and talk on our private line” (Solomon, 1997).

User services

If online newspapers can provide services that keep users returning to their sites, the newspapers will gain an important place in the digital environment and become more attractive to advertisers. Analysts see navigating functions, customizable content, and searchable archives services as most valuable.

Lasica (1996a) sees the potential of newspapers to become navigational devices for exploring the news, whether breaking news or what is now considered "old" news. New media's ability to archive news stories and sort and retrieve information by topic can be one of its most valuable services. News archives are useful because they come from a reliable source, unlike much of the information on the Internet, and provide news that has extreme value for the reader (Noth, 1996d). Some papers, such as the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, offer searchable story archives as far back as five years (Reason, 1995d). Many new-media watchers see a free online archive as part of a news organization's responsibility to the public (Biggs, 1997).

Noth (1996d) recommends searchable classifieds, which are of value to both users and advertisers. Martire (1995) sees the most significant impact of online publications on print products as the hit in print classified linage. He advises papers to maintain the classified franchise online. Other services touted by analysts and professionals include Mercury Center's personal comics page, which allows readers to receive strips not available in their geographic area (Reason, 1995b); the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution's* four automated wire services and hypertext links to the Web (Reason, 1995d); and the *Boston Globe's* interactive Java news ticker (Cohen, 1996).

Research Questions

While there is insufficient prior research on the content and services offered by online newspapers to formulate hypotheses, the literature cited above provided the researchers with several paths for analysis. Industry observers criticize newspapers for not being innovative enough when going digital. This research is designed to test whether the criticism is valid. The researchers took the view that the critics were correct, expecting to find the flaws outlined above.

On structure issues, the researchers expected that most online papers studied would not contain news on the first available screen. On content issues, the researchers expected that most online newspapers would provide geographically local content similar to their print versions and would not customize national news; instead, national news would appear mainly in links to news wires. On news writing and news presentation issues, the researchers expected that the news articles would resemble those in the print products, using traditional newspaper writing style with linear storytelling instead of linked boxes of text. The researchers also expected to find few sites using multimedia applications to tell the news. For user interaction, the researchers expected few papers to be providing staff e-mail addresses or online forums to allow for reader feedback. User services are one of the few areas in which analysts see progress, therefore researchers expected most online products to have searchable archives, carry advertising, and have searchable classified ads. For other services, such as customizable news, comics and Internet access, the researchers had no expectations.

The researchers also were interested in how online products connected with larger print newspapers (those with circulation greater than 300,000) differed from those at mid-sized (100,000 to 300,000) and smaller print newspapers (circulation less than 100,000) in each of the above categories. It was expected that because larger print newspapers might have greater resources available, their online products might be closer to the critics' ideal. Similarly, researchers were interested in how more established sites (those that had gone online in 1994 or 1995) compared with newer sites (those started in 1996 or 1997). It was expected that more established sites might have had more time to make improvements and therefore might be closer to the critics' ideal.

Method

To answer the research questions outlined above, researchers conducted a content analysis of a sample of U.S. online newspapers. First, a list of all online newspapers currently publishing in the United States was obtained from the *Editor & Publisher* Web site's online newspaper section. As of February 1997, the list included about 880 online newspapers, alternative publications, publishing groups, news magazines and specialty publications in the United States. The list is routinely updated to add new papers and remove some no longer publishing. The list had been updated within a month of the time the sample was drawn for this study.

Because researchers were interested in how print newspapers are adapting to the online environment, the target population was online newspaper sites actually providing news content and connected with a U.S. newspaper. About 60 percent of the total publications listed on the site are classified as daily newspapers. In addition, some of the daily newspaper sites on the *Editor & Publisher* list are informational only, providing details about the print product. The site also includes news magazines, business publications, and alternative weeklies with online products. These publications were not considered for the sample. The list also contains a small number of dial-up (BBS) services (33) that were not included in the sample. Finally, some of the 880 publications listed were no longer online at the time the sample was drawn. The researchers estimate that about 50 percent of the total U.S. Web sites listed by *Editor & Publisher* match the criteria for the sample.

Researchers then selected newspapers to achieve regional distribution by choosing one online newspaper under each state listing. Next, additional sites were selected under the "national" category. Additional online products were added to the sample to achieve a balance among online sites connected with large newspapers (circulation greater than 300,000), those connected with mid-sized newspapers (circulation from 100,000 to 300,000), and those connected with smaller newspapers (circulation less than 100,000).[1] Finally, additional papers were selected to achieve a balance between more established sites (those that went online in 1994 or 1995) and newer sites (those started in 1996 or 1997). The resulting sample consisted of 83 online news publications connected with U.S. dailies, about 9.4 percent of the 880 U.S. sites listed by *Editor & Publisher* but closer to 20 percent of the current online publications that meet the criteria defined by the researchers.

The unit of analysis for this project was the entire online publication. Researchers examined the sample publications over a two-week period in February 1997. First, researchers collected demographic information about the online site and its corresponding printed newspaper, including location, circulation size, and date the paper went online. Next, the researchers coded questions designed to examine each of the five areas discussed above. On structure issues, coders

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[1] Circulation figures were taken from the 1995 edition of the *Editor & Publisher Yearbook*. The non-Sunday or weekday

analyzed on what level or screen the first news content appeared and what the layout of the first news screen looked like. On content issues, coders noted whether the publication carried local news, whether national news was present, whether a link was provided to an automatic news wire such as the *Associated Press*, and how recently the news had been updated. For writing style and look of news, articles were examined and classified as being traditional/linear, fragmented or mixed. For sites with mixed or fragmented news writing style, the length of the blocks was coded. Multimedia features, such as use of audio, video, animation were then analyzed. For user interaction, coders noted whether reader feedback was allowed, whether staff or departmental e-mail addresses were listed, whether online forums were present, and whether reader responses were posed on the site. For user services, researchers examined whether archives were present, how far back archives

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circulation figures were used.

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went, and whether users were charged for archive retrieval. In addition, the sites were coded for use of advertising in general, classified ads, and real estate ads. Finally, coders analyzed whether comics were present, whether news could be customized, whether wires could be searched, and whether Internet access was provided through the site.

Two researchers coded aspects of the online publications on prepared code sheets using a uniform codebook designed for the study. To determine the intercoder reliability coefficient, both coders independently analyzed nine of the 83 publications included in the sample. Using the formula provided by North, Holsti, Zaninovvch, and Zines (1963), reliability ranged from +.76 to +1.00 with an average intercoder reliability of +.91.

Findings

The Sample

The 83 sites were connected with print newspapers ranging in size from circulation of 1,435 to 1,893,770. Nearly 39% (32) were classified as small newspapers; 32.5% (27) were mid-sized papers; 25.3% (21) were large papers; and no circulation size was available on 3.6% (3) newspapers. Papers were evenly distributed throughout the country: 22 (26.5%) were in the West; 18 (21.7%) were in the Midwest; 17 (20.4%) were in the South or Southeast; and 22 (26.5%) were in the Northeast. Another four papers (4.8%) were located in Alaska, Hawaii, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. Six papers (7.2%) went online in 1994; 29 (34.9%) in 1995; 33 (39.8%) in 1996; and one (1.2%) in 1997.[2]

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[2] Online start date could not be determined for 14 (16.9%) of the sample.

Structure

While critics contend that online newspapers make readers click through several screens to find the news, this expectation was not supported by the data. *(See Table 1)* More than half of the sites studied (44) contained some form of news content on the first screen. In addition, most online products went beyond simply putting a headline on the first screen devoted to news. Nearly 70% (58) included either a headline and capsule of each news story or the headline and full story on the first news screen, meaning readers could get some news content without going farther into the site.

No significant differences emerged on any of the structure questions between newer sites and more established sites. However, large newspapers (those with circulation greater than 300,000) were significantly more likely to have news on the first available screen (M=1.3) than small newspapers (those with circulation less than 100,000), which were more likely to wait until the second screen to include news (M=1.7, t (49) =2.2, p <.04).

Content

As expected, virtually every site in the sample (74 or 89.2%) provided local news. Only nine sites (10.8%) did not. National news was less common but still present in a majority of the sites (45 or 54.2%). However, as the critics assert, most online news products offering national news are simply offering a direct feed from a wire service, such as the *Associated Press,* and making little effort to put their own spin on national events. Of the 45 sites offering national news, 11 offered national news only from a wire service; 17 provided both a link to an automated news wire and national news in their publication; and 17 provided national news only in their publication. *(See Table 2)* However, the researchers observed that even the national news in the publications was mainly taken straight from the *Associated Press* or another news wire with no attempt made to customize it.

The majority of the sites were updating their news content daily. Of the 59 sites (71.1% of the total 83) updating daily, eight were updating virtually every hour. The remaining 24 sites (28.9% of the total 83) had not been updated within a day of the time the researchers coded the sites.

As with structure, no significant differences were found between established and news sites on the content questions. But differences were found comparing sites by size of their print companion. *(See Table 2).* Large newspaper sites were significantly more likely to carry national news than mid-sized or small paper sites (chi square (2) = 13.7, p < .01). Similarly, sites connected to large and mid-sized newspapers were more likely to have a link to an automated news wire than sites run by small newspapers (chi square (2) = 6.1, p <.05). Finally, sites connected with small newspapers were less likely to have updated news content within the hour and more likely to wait longer than 24 hours to update their news (chi square (4) = 6.1, $p < .01$).

The look of news

The critics appear to be correct in asserting that few online newspapers are adapting their writing style to fit the new medium. Only 13 (15.7%) of the newspapers surveyed used any type of linked boxes or non-traditional storytelling. Of those 13, three broke up the news copy into blocks shorter than one screen, three used blocks equal to one screen, and seven used blocks of text longer than one screen. *(See Table 3)* Likewise, few online services were using multimedia elements in presenting the news. While 44 sites (53%) used animation, 13 (15.7%) used audio, and 6 (7.2%) used video, most sites were using multimedia in ads, not to tell the news. Only 12 sites (14.5%) sites used either audio, video, or animation in news sections.

Again, no differences emerged on any of the approach to news writing variables between older and newer sites. However, several significant differences were detected when comparing the sites by size of printed newspaper. Sites connected with large papers and mid-sized papers were significantly more likely to include a mix between traditional, linear storytelling and fragmented writing structure (chi square (2) = 7.28, p. < .03) than small newspaper sites. In addition, small papers were less likely to have sites that featured animation (chi square (2) = 9.23, p. < .01), to use audio content (chi square (2) = 11.45, p. < .01), and use multimedia approaches to telling the news (chi square (2) = 17.54, p. < .001) than larger papers.

User interaction

Virtually all sites (79 or 95.2% of the total) allowed for some type of reader feedback, even if they simply included the paper's e-mail address for comments. Fewer papers, but still the majority (46 sites or 55.4% of the total), provided either the reporter's or editor's e-mail addresses or gave addresses for specific departments such as news, opinion, and features. Papers weren't as likely to provide online forums. About 40% (33 sites), allowed readers to discuss news and issues on forums. The majority of papers (48 sites or 57.8% of the total) appear responsive to reader comments, at least to the extent of posting the comments in a forum, a letters to the editor section, or attached to news articles. *(See Table 4)*

While no differences emerged in comparing older and newer sites on user interaction, several differences were detected when comparing the sites by size of print product. Virtually all large newspapers provided online readers with reporter or departmental e-mail addresses, whereas only about a third of the small papers did so (chi square (2) = 18.70, p. < .001). The same pattern held for providing online discussion forums (chi square (2) = 14.69, p. < .001). *(See Table 4)*

User services

Although critics urge newspapers to offer searchable news archives free as a public service, fewer than a third of the sites surveyed are doing so. While 58 sites (69.9%) do contain archives of news content, some allowing readers to search for articles published more than five years ago, only 39 sites (47% of the total 83) allow readers to search the archives. Only 24 (28.9% of the total 83) did not charge for the search. (*See Table 5)* Few sites (9) provided searchable news wires, but seven of those nine sites allowed readers to search the wires for no charge. Only eight sites (9.6%) allowed readers to create a customized news profile. Finally, most sites did not offer comics or Internet access as a service to readers.

All but nine of the sites surveyed accepted advertising; 60 (72.3%) contained classified ads online; and 60 (72.3%) included real estate ads online. Forty-three papers (51% or the total 83) allowed users to search classified ads; no paper charged for searching classifieds. While most sites with real estate ads only provided text descriptions of the properties, 19 sites combined text and visuals such as maps and pictures of the houses in their real estate sections.

One significant difference emerged between established (1994 or 1995 startup date) and newer (1996 or 1997 startup date) sites on user services. All 35 established sites carried advertising at the time of the study, while only 24 of the 34 newer sites had advertising.[3] Of the 10 new sites that did not have advertising, four did not accept ads and six accepted ads but had none on their site. As in the other sections above, significant differences for user services were found when in comparing the sites by the size of their print counterpart. (*See Table 5)* When examining papers providing classified ads online, large and mid-size papers were much more likely to offer searchable classifieds as a service than small newspapers (chi square (2) = 16.96, p. <.001). Of the papers providing searchable archives, small papers were less likely to have online archives dating back more than five years than mid-size or large online papers (chi square (2) = 19.11, p. < .05). Interestingly, small papers were more likely to provide searchable wires than mid-size or large newspapers (chi square (2) = 6.53, p. < .05). The researchers observed that this finding probably stemmed from the fact that online services offered by large and mid-size papers were more likely to provide a link to the *Associated Press* news wire, which at the time of the study was in the process of adding a search function.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that critics of online newspapers are making valid statements, at least in some areas.

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[3] Again, online start date could not be determined for 14 sites.

Observations that few newspapers are rethinking the content they provide online appear to be valid. Online newspapers seem to be concentrating on the same type of local news present in their print versions. Little effort is made to put a local spin on national news; most online news services simply provide national content in the form in which it is transmitted by the *Associate Press* news wire. While most online newspapers were updating their content at least daily, few were taking advantage of the immediacy that Internet news delivery can provide by updating their news content hourly. Similarly, online newspapers appear to be making few changes from the print standard of linear storytelling. Only a few online newspapers are using fragmented storytelling styles or using multimedia elements to tell the news.

However, online newspapers do appear to be doing better than what the critics contend in other areas. Critics suggest that online newspapers are doing a poor job designing a shallow structure, forcing readers to click through several screens to find the news. The results of this study do not support that view. Most sites offer news – typically headlines, pictures, captions, and summaries – on the first screen available when readers log onto a site. In addition, most online newspapers allow for some type of reader interaction with the newspaper through e-mail. However, the critics appear correct in their assertion that most sites are failing to provide online discussion forums.

The examination of user services also produced mixed results. Online newspapers seem to be doing a good job of providing advertising and allowing users to search classified ads. However, few papers allow free searching of news archives, provide searchable news wires, offer customizable news, include comics, or provide Internet access.

Some industry observers have touted online publishing as the great equalizer, allowing small newspapers – or even individuals – to compete with the media giants. However, the analysis in this research comparing small, mid-size and large papers on the five areas shows this is not the case. Sites run by large newspapers appear to be coming closer to meeting the ideal described by professionals and analysts than those run by small newspapers. Larger newspapers' online products were more likely than smaller newspapers' online products to have news available on the first screen, carry national news, provide links to news wires, update news more frequently, break from the traditional news writing style, use multimedia in news stories, provide e-mail addresses, offer online discussion forums, allow searching of classified ads, and have more comprehensive news archives. These findings suggest that large newspapers, which often have more financial and staff resources available to devote to their online products, do seem to have the advantage over sites offered by small newspapers.

Interestingly, the start date of an online news service appears to make no difference in how well sites are meeting the critics' ideal. The only difference detected between established sites and newer sites was in whether advertising is accepted or present. This might be explained by the fact that companies might be reluctant to advertise on a site that has not been proven to have staying power or that newspapers might have a difficult time convincing advertisers in their print product to try online advertising. In addition, newer sites might take a while to established a policy on accepting advertising and acquire the staff expertise necessary to help clients design ads for online consumption.

While this research has attempted to answer the question of whether the deficiencies pointed out by critics actually exist, a final question researchers, professionals and industry observers might ask is whether this criticism is valid. For example, while most newspapers do appear guilty of "shovelware" when putting news content online, is that necessarily a crime? Some contend that readers want online papers to contain the information found in their print product. While "shovelware" has been repeatedly criticized elsewhere by analysts, there clearly is a desire for it on newspaper Web sites. Neil Budde, editor of *The Wall Street Journal Online*, says people insist on reproducing virtually everything available in print (Budde, 1996). Terry Schwadron, editor of the *Los Angeles Times* online paper agrees, saying shovelware is in demand on his site as well (Schwadron, 1996). John Lux, editor of the *Chicago Tribune Online*, says shovelware, treated in the right way, can be the most compelling content on Web sites. Searchable shovelware, says Lux, is one of the most valuable services the Tribune is attempting (Lux, 1996).

To answer this final question – whether the critics are on track – further research must be conducted. Future research should focus on the online audience. Audits of online newspapers should be conducted to discover what areas of the newspaper are most popular – and, conversely, unpopular—to the audience. Surveys of the online audience should also be conducted. These surveys should measure the enjoyablity of using online newspapers. Do online readers prefer to receive their news in a multimedia format that includes text, animation, sound, graphics and video components, or does this audience prefer the traditional text-heavy style which currently permeates the field? Do online readers enjoy using the sites for the news information they house, or do the readers prefer the information about local events and activities? Does the audience crave online forums in which they can discuss the news and how it impacts their community?

Reader preferences also could be examined through experimental research both in the laboratory setting and in real world online environments. Experimental research might be helpful in studying what style of news presentation best helps a user understand and process the news. For example, a study could be designed to test whether users enjoy creating their own narratives through the fragmented form of story telling in which they select the order in reading a series of links. This type of research also could examine whether online readers learn and remember more with traditional writing structure or a more fragmented style.

Finally, surveys and experimental research of the audience reluctant to use online newspapers should be conducted. Why are these people disinclined to use the online newspapers? What services could online newspapers offer this audience to help them overcome their reluctance or anxiety? Answers to these questions should provide the industry with a road map of the digital terrain it should cover and help newspapers produce valuable sites that compel users to return often.

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Table 1
Structure Items
(n=83)

Placement of News Content Appears		
On First Level	44	(53%)
On Second Level	28	(33.7%)
On Third Level	8*	(9.6%)
Layout of First News Screen		
Headline only	22	(26.5%)
Headline and Capsule	53	(63.9%)
Headline and Full Story	5*	(6%)

* 3 cases missing (No news content)

Table 2
Content Items
(n=83)

Site Provides Local News		
Yes	74	(89.2%)
No	9	(10.8%)
Site Provides National News		
No	38	(45.8%)
Yes	45	(54.3%)
In Wire Service Only	11	(13.3%)
In Wire Service and Publication	17	(20.5%)
In Publication Only	17	(20.5%)
Site Last Updated		
Within an Hour	8	(9.6%)
Between 1 - 24 Hours	51	(61.5%)
More than 24 Hours	24	(28.9%)

Newspaper Circulation * National News Crosstabulation

Count

		National News		
		yes	no	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	10	22	32
	100,000 to 300,000	17	10	27
	greater than 300,000	17	4	21
Total		44	36	80

Chi-Square (2) = 13.69, p<.01

Newspaper Circulation * Link to Newswire Crosstabulation

Count

		Link to Newswire		
		yes	no	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	8	24	32
	100,000 to 300,000	15	12	27
	greater than 300,000	10	11	21
Total		33	47	80

Chi-Square (2) = 6.12, p<.05

Newspaper Circulation * Last update Crosstabulation

Count

		Last update			
		within an hour	1-24 hours	More than 24 hours	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	1	15	16	32
	100,000 to 300,000	5	19	3	27
	greater than 300,000	2	16	3	21
Total		8	50	22	80

Chi-Square (4) = 15.49, p<.01

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Table 3
Writing Items
(n=83)

Writing Style		
Traditional/Linear Writing Style	67	(80.7%)
Linked/Sequential Storytelling Style	13*	(15.7%)
Linked Stories are		
Shorter than One Computer Screen	3	(3.6%)
An Entire Computer Screen	3	(3.6%)
Longer than An Entire Computer Screen	7	(8.4%)
Multimedia Applications		
Animation		
Yes	44	(53%)
No	39	(47%)
Audio		
Yes	13	(15.7%)
No	70	(84.3%)
Video		
Yes	6	(7.2%)
No	77	(92.8%)
Multimedia Approach to News		
Yes	12	(14.5%)
No	71	(85.5%)

*3 missing cases (No news content)

Newspaper Circulation * What writing style does site use Crosstabulation

Count

		What writing style does site use		
		Traditional/Linear stories	Mixed	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	30	1	31
	100,000 to 300,000	20	6	26
	greater than 300,000	14	6	20
Total		64	13	77

Chi-Square (2) = 7.28, p<.05

Table 4
User Interaction Items
(n=83)

Allow for Reader Feedback		
Yes	79	(95.2%)
No	4	(4.8%)
Provide Reporter's E-mail Address		
Yes	46	(55.4%)
No	37	(44.6%)
Provide Online Discussion Forums		
Yes	33	(39.8%)
No	50	(60.2%)
Provide Reader Responses		
No	35	(42.2%)
Yes	48	(57.8%)
In the Forums	26	(31.3%)
In Letters to the Editor Section	14	(16.9%)
In Both Forums and Letters to the Editor	7	(8.4%)
Attached to the News Story	1	(1.2%)

Newspaper Circulation * Provide reporters' email address Crosstabulation

Count

		Provide reporters' email address		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	10	22	32
	100,000 to 300,000	17	10	27
	greater than 300,000	19	2	21
Total		46	34	80

Chi-Square (2) = 18.70, p<.001

Newspaper Circulation * Online discussion forums Crosstabulation

Count

		Online discussion forums		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	6	26	32
	100,000 to 300,000	12	15	27
	greater than 300,000	15	6	21
Total		33	47	80

Chi-Square (2) = 14.69, p<.001

Table 5
User Services Items
(n=83)

Archives of News Stories		
Yes	58	(69.9%)
No	25	(30.1%)
How far Back do Archives Go		
N/A	25	(30.1%)
1 Month or Less	8	(9.6%)
1 Year or Less	14	(16.9%)
More than 1 Year	18	(21.7%)
More than Five Years	14*	(16.9%)
Searchable Archives		
No	44	(53%)
No Archives	25	(30.1%)
Archives not Searchable	19	(22.9%)
Yes	39	(47%)
Charge for Search	15	(18.1%)
No Charge for Search	24	(28.9%)
Customizable News		
Yes	8	(9.6%)
No	75	(90.4%)
Site Accepts Advertising		
Yes	67	(80.7%)
No	9	(10.8%)
Accepts but None Present	7	(8.4%)
Provide Classified Ads		
Yes	60	(72.3%)
No	23	(27.7%)
Provide Real Estate Ads		
Yes	60	(72.3%)
No	23	(27.7%)
Searchable Classified Ads		
No	17	(20.5%)
Yes	43	(51.8%)
No Classified Ads	23	(27.7%)
Charge for Searching Ads		
Yes	0	(0%)
No	43	(51.8%)
No Searchable Classified Ads	40	(48.2%)
Look of Real Estate Ads		
Text Only	41	(49.4%)
Text and Visual Information	19	(22.9%)
No Real Estate Ads Available	23	(27.7%)
Provides Comics		
Yes	30	(36.1%)
No	53	(63.9%)
Provides Internet Access		
Yes	17	(20.5%)
No	66	(79.5%)

*4 missing cases (cannot discern how far back archives go)

Newspaper Circulation * Searchable Classified Ads Crosstabulation

Count

		Searchable Classified Ads		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	9	12	21
	100,000 to 300,000	18	1	19
	greater than 300,000	16	2	18
Total		43	15	58

Chi-Square (2) = 16.96, p<.001

Newspaper Circulation * Searchable Wires Crosstabulation

Count

		Searchable Wires		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	5	4	9
	100,000 to 300,000	1	13	14
	greater than 300,000	3	7	10
Total		9	24	33

Chi-Square (2) = 6.53, p<.05

Newspaper Circulation * How far back do archives go? Crosstabulation

Count

		How far back do archives go?					
		One month or less	One month to one year	One year to five years	More than 5 years	Can't discern	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	1	9	7	1	1	19
	100,000 to 300,000	3	3	3	6	3	18
	greater than 300,000	4	1	6	7		18
Total		8	13	16	14	4	55

Chi-Square (8) = 19.11, p<.05

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Table 4
User Interaction Items
(n=83)

Allow for Reader Feedback		
Yes	79	(95.2%)
No	4	(4.8%)
Provide Reporter's E-mail Address		
Yes	46	(55.4%)
No	37	(44.6%)
Provide Online Discussion Forums		
Yes	33	(39.8%)
No	50	(60.2%)
Provide Reader Responses		
No	35	(42.2%)
Yes	48	(57.8%)
In the Forums	26	(31.3%)
In Letters to the Editor Section	14	(16.9%)
In Both Forums and Letters to the Editor	7	(8.4%)
Attached to the News Story	1	(1.2%)

Newspaper Circulation * Provide reporters' email address Crosstabulation

Count

		Provide reporter's email address		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	10	22	32
	100,000 to 300,000	17	10	27
	greater than 300,000	19	2	21
Total		46	34	80

Chi-Square (2) = 18.70, p=.001

Newspaper Circulation * Online discussion forums Crosstabulation

Count

		Online discussion forums		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	6	26	32
	100,000 to 300,000	12	15	27
	greater than 300,000	15	6	21
Total		33	47	80

Chi-Square (2) = 14.69, p<.001

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Newspaper Circulation * Animation Crosstabulation

Count

		Animation		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	11	21	32
	100,000 to 300,000	19	8	27
	greater than 300,000	14	7	21
Total		44	36	80

Chi-Square (2) = 9.23, p<.01

Newspaper Circulation * Audio Crosstabulation

Count

		Audio		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	1	31	32
	100,000 to 300,000	4	23	27
	greater than 300,000	8	13	21
Total		13	67	80

Chi-Square (2) = 11.46, p<.01

Newspaper Circulation * Multimedia approach to news Crosstabulation

Count

		Multimedia approach to news		
		Yes	No	Total
Newspaper Circulation	less than 100,000	1	31	32
	100,000 to 300,000	2	25	27
	greater than 300,000	9	12	21
Total		12	68	80

Chi-Square (2) = 17.54, p<.001

Self-Promotion and the Internet

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Abstract

Economic theory and historical evidence suggest a newspaper's coverage is affected by its financial interests. It was hypothesized that newspapers online themselves would provide more coverage of the Internet (in their traditional publications) than newspapers not online. Based on a content analysis (using Nexis) of 30 newspapers, a statistically significant difference between the two groups was found for the average number of stories with "Internet" in the headline, but not for average story length.

Introduction

Newspapers, like all businesses, are periodically faced with new forms of competition. The industry's newest foe is the Internet. About a third of American households own a personal computer, a figure that is expected to rise to between 53 and 60 percent by 2001. A recent report by Forrester Research, which does work for a number of major media companies, sized up the situation in rather stark terms. "The PC is a cancer that will eat away at the vital audiences of established media" (Levins, 1996). In regard to newspapers specifically, the report stated that "the Internet exceeds the timeliness and depth of newspapers by an order of magnitude. As a result, consumers will subscribe less and shift to newsstand purchases on an as-needed basis."

Nobody expects there to be any shortage of on-line alternatives to traditional newspapers. The removal of the printing press from the publishing process substantially lowers the cost of entering the market (Compaine, 1985). By late 1996, there were estimated to be more than 4,000 news sites on the world wide web, only about 40 percent of which were owned by print newspaper companies (Levins, 1996b). It's easy to see why newspaper publishers might be wary of new competitors, since they've already been hit hard by competition from television (Demers, 1994; Nixon & Ward, 1961; Rosse, 1980; McCombs, 1972).

None of this is lost on the newspaper industry, which has begun to fight back. There were less than two dozen papers with on-line editions at the end of 1993. Today, papers are going online at the rate of more than two a day, with some people predicting there will be 2,000 on-line papers by 1998 (Price, 1996). There's ample evidence that the decision of newspapers to go online is at least in part about money. Jack Fuller, chief executive of the *Chicago Tribune*, summed up the questions newspaper executives have to ask themselves this way: "What's fundamental about human nature and how it's likely to respond to a new environment? How do we marry up people's preferences and behavior with our commercial and social purposes?" (Christopher, 1994, p. 27).

Clearly, there's a lot at stake. Advertising at daily newspapers in 1994 totaled roughly $34 billion. The total for all media was roughly $90 billion. "The fact is," wrote Stephen Isaacs, associate dean of Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, "the new computer entrepreneurs are itching for the existing, dedicated journalistic entrepreneurs to leave an opening" (Isaacs, 1995, p. 50).

In an electronic survey of executives at newspapers that have gone online, 76 percent of respondents said they'd done so at least in part to protect their core product. The same percentage said protecting ad revenue was also a consideration (Price, 1996). "The advertising franchise is a

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big deal here," Price noted. "If newspapers do not move into this new medium someone else will and they know it" (p.12).

Just as newspaper managers have discovered the Internet, so, apparently, have editors and reporters. Coverage of the Internet - which has been around in some form since the early 1970s, has become pervasive in the past few years (Morris & Ogan, 1996; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Ellsworth & Ellsworth, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

This paper attempts to show that like all businesses in a capitalist society, newspapers can be expected to act rationally to attempt to maximize profits. It will further try to show that due to the constancy of media consumption patterns and the functional equivalence of the Internet and newspapers, it's logical for newspaper publishers to fear competition from the Internet. From there, it seems rational that faced with such competition, newspapers would limit the amount of free publicity they give a competitor. Conversely, it's logical to expect a newspaper that's made the investment to go online itself to seek to maximize its investment by promoting the Internet. Examples from the newspaper industry's past battles with radio and then television will be offered as evidence that, at least in the past, newspapers have reacted in the face of competition very much as has been hypothesized here. The subjective nature of gatekeeping will be explored as an alternative explanation.

Economic Incentives

Among the basic guiding forces of capitalism according to Smith (1921) is the idea that both buyers and sellers can be expected to act rationally and in their own self-interest. Contemporary economists continue to make the same assumptions (Alexander, Owers & Carveth, 1993). McManus (1995) described the relationship as follows: "Both sides are trying to get the greatest return for the least investment. The first commandment of the marketplace is not 'do unto others as you would have them do to you' but rather 'caveat emptor' - let the buyer beware" (p. 317). Although media firms are a somewhat different breed, the primary goal remains the maximization of shareholder value (Alexander, et al., 1993).

Complicating matters from the consumer's perspective is the fact that newspapers are what economists call a credence good, meaning the reader has no way of truly evaluating the news product because she can't know for sure what's been left out (McManus, 1995). This is arguably more true than ever because most newspapers operate as monopolies (Gomery, 1993). This fact would seem to give newspapers some leeway in slanting coverage to serve its interests without losing credibility.

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Although they prefer not to admit it, newspapers have selfish interests just like the rest of us. "They have self-interest, as does every individual and institution, but they have more power to pursue that self-interest, and they control access to the public mind" (Bagdikian, 1985, p. 103). That said, news organizations are held to different standards than are companies that produce more traditional commodities (Compaine, 1985). A newspaper's role in the marketplace of ideas and journalistic integrity can't simply be thrown out the window in the name of higher short-term profits (Bagdikian, 1985; Compaine, 1985; McManus, 1995). Instead, a happy medium must be struck.

> Modern media are complex, and the need to capture and keep large audiences inhibits propaganda that is too obviously propaganda. The major media carry much that their owners personally disagree with. But this does not prevent propagandistic use by emphasizing certain issues and de-emphasizing others, by pursuing some subjects relentlessly and quickly abandoning others (Bagdikian, 1985, p.103).

A number of observers have noted what appears to be much more of a bottom-line mentality among newspapers than in years past (Bagdikian, 1985; Compaine, 1985; McManus, 1994; McManus, 1995).

Breed (1957) suggested that newspaper owners and publishers affect content by establishing unwritten but closely followed policies. An individual newspaper's policy includes which topics ought to be covered favorably and which should be left alone altogether. Breed argues that due in part to sensitivity to journalistic norms, these policies are promoted quietly but consistently. Reporters and editors that want to get ahead in an organization quickly learn which topics will endear them to management and which are best left alone. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) concurred.

> The longer people work for a media organization, the more socialized they are to the policies - stated and unstated - of the organization. Media workers learn what their organizations want by observing others, by receiving feedback from others, and by observing what makes it into the finished communication product (p.265).

Constancy Hypothesis

The constancy hypothesis suggests that the amount of money spent on mass media will remain fairly constant from year to year and is a function of the overall economy (McCombs, 1972). In other words, when the economy is good, people (both consumers and advertisers) will spend more money on mass media than when the economy is less well off, but they'll spend roughly the same proportion of their available wealth. For the hypothesis to be supported, mass media spending ought to remain relatively constant even in periods when the number of alternatives has increased. McCombs found reasonably strong support for the constancy hypothesis when examining consumer and advertiser spending on mass media between 1929 and 1968, a period that saw significant growth in the television industry.

Although the constancy hypothesis predicts that the emergence of a new media will affect existing media, it doesn't suggest which media will be most affected. Bogart (1956) suggested that functional equivalence will determine which media are most affected by new media. In other words, the more similar the new medium and existing medium are the more likely one is to take away from the audience of the other. To a certain extent, one is substituted for another. "It is unlikely that a new communication technology provides a totally new service. Rather such technologies are likely to be extensions of existing services. These functional equivalents must battle for economic survival or economic accommodation in the marketplace" (McCombs, 1972, p. 47). For example, Robinson's (1979) examination of changing media habits between 1965 and 1975 found that among respondents under 50, a decline in newspaper reading closely paralleled increases in magazine and book reading.

The collective face of the Internet is still taking shape and it's not altogether clear what it's going to look like 10 years from now. But an argument can be made that right now as an information source the Internet is most functionally equivalent to printed forms of media such as newspapers and magazines. A study by Forrester Research, a media research firm, provides support for such an assumption (Levins, 1996). The firm predicts, based on consumer purchase-and-use patterns, that by 2001 people will spend 14 percent less time with both newspapers and magazines. By comparison, the company predicts people will watch 5 percent less television.

It should be noted that there are instances where the constancy hypothesis appears not to have been supported. A survey by Bromley and Bowles (1995) found that most residents of Blacksburg, VA, where Internet access is offered free, claimed not to be spending any less time with traditional media than before having access to the Internet. However, a response rate of 29 percent and the challenge respondents face accurately recalling old media use habits, raise questions of validity. Wood and O'Hare (1991) suggest that in order to pay for new technologies such as cable television and home video consumers may have permanently altered the amount they're willing to spend on mass media, at the expense of nonmedia spending. Still, the rush by newspapers to get online suggests the industry isn't taking any chances.

Historical Perspective

In all likelihood, newspapers will probably adapt rather than die (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996), but that does nothing to diminish the fact that for the time being, at least, the Internet seems to many to be a very real threat. The rush by newspapers to go online is not in the least surprising taken in the context of how media typically react when threatened. "Whenever important new media technologies appear, they destabilize existing media industries - forcing large-scale and often very rapid restructuring. Large corporations are forced into cutthroat competition to gain control of new technology. Sometimes they succeed and sometimes they fail" (Baran & Davis, 1995, p. 38).

Baran and Davis identify two strategies companies can implement concurrently to survive. The first is to find functions they can serve better than the newer media. The second is to diversify and become a part of the new media. But before organizations get to this point, an earlier strategy often involves down playing or denigrating the new media. "For example, when television began to compete with newspapers, newspapers were filled with stories reporting the complaints of television critics" (Baran & Davis, 1995, p. 41).

In the 1920s as radio was developing, newspaper publishers for the most part didn't see radio stations as a competitive threat (Chester, 1949). The fledgling industry received support from newspapers that included free program listings. However, the relationship broke down as broadcast companies began to expand and had more success in competing for advertisers. In particular, publishers became increasingly hostile as radio stations began to broadcast more news. In 1933, the Columbia Broadcasting System created the Columbia News Service to gather news for broadcast. Chester notes that many newspapers responded by dropping CBS program listings while continuing to publish those of its competitors. Chester quoted from a 1931 speech of Merlin H. Aylesworth, then president of the National Broadcasting Company, which seems to sum up how broadcasters felt they were treated by newspapers:

> The sum and substance of the newspaper viewpoint is that broadcasting can no longer be considered a normal editorial subject but, rather, must be handled as a serious and dangerous competitor for advertising and circulation patronage....An antagonistic frame of mind seems quite justified on such a diet of assumptions (Chester, 1949, p. 254).

However, Chester noted that things seemed to change as more and more newspaper publishers began to obtain broadcast licenses. By the early 1940s, the majority of newspapers published program listings free of charge. Baran and Davis (1995) similarly argue that the newspaper industry has a history of antagonism toward television.

This brings us to the point of this study. It's believed that newspapers that lack a significant on-line presence are more likely than their counterparts that have expanded into this new medium to down play coverage of the Internet. The idea is that newspaper will typically first try to denigrate the competition and later adopt an "if you can't beat them join them" strategy. Once this occurs, its coverage of the medium will increase and become more favorable.

There are two primary reasons to expect this to be the case. The first is economic. A newspaper that has invested the resources to go on-line has a financial incentive to at least promote the concept of on-line services on its editorial pages. Conversely, papers that aren't on-line have a financial disincentive. Namely, they'd be promoting a competing product without any potential benefit.

The suggestion that news content may sometimes reflect the financial interests of the newspaper's owner may offend the sensibilities of some. After all, reporters, by training, are taught to be independent of their bosses' financial interests. Indeed, "the trend over the course of the twentieth century has been toward journalists' increased demand for professional autonomy from their firms' business interests" (Turow, 1994, p. 31). In fact, the literature suggests that media organizations typically steer clear of meddling with editorial content on a daily basis. But this is almost certainly one of those rules where there are exceptions.

> The rhetoric of media corporations is consistent: They do not interfere with the professional selection of content for their newspapers, magazines, broadcast stations, book houses and movie studios. This book shows that this is technically true for most operators in day-to-day, hour-to-hour operations, but it is not true for larger issues in which media corporations have a strong self-interest" (Bagdikian, 1990, p. 100).

Turow (1994) argues that the pressure placed on reporters to play down information that would either make the organization look bad or the competition look good, are often subtle. Borrowing from Strauss (1978), Turow argues that "silent bargains" are sometimes struck between media workers and their superiors. Namely, don't rock the boat and your career will be better off. Interviews Turow conducted with media workers at *Time* magazine and a pair of newspapers confirmed this. "Journalists in their firms, they believed, understand that their editors consider some types of stories off limits" (p. 35).

Turow offers *Time* as an example of how sometimes a publication's editorial content seems to be affected by its parent company's other financial concerns. For instance, the magazine named media mogul Ted Turner its 1991 Man of the Year. Time Warner, which owns *Time*, also controlled 30 percent of Turner Broadcasting System. However, this fact was never mentioned in the rather lengthy article.

Time also ran a cover story on author Scott Turow the same week Warner Books was releasing one of his books in paperback and a few months before Warner Brothers would release the film version. Again, the Time Warner link was never mentioned. Although the *Time* employees Joseph Turow interviewed insisted that their judgment hadn't been affected by the Time Warner connection, they were willing to believe some of their coworkers could have been influenced.

Three of the *Time* workers Turow interviewed suspected that some *Time* employees were focusing on stories that might gain them favor with their superiors.

> They might, the employees argued, quietly -- without telling anyone -- be arranging their writing in response to key Time Warner publicity needs with the hope of later rewards from management. Only one respondent, a writer, admitted that he might do that himself in the future (Turow, 1994, p. 43).

Of course, it's also possible that socializing factors within a news organization might cause an editorial worker to alter content to benefit the organization without being aware this had occurred. Reporters often get overt cues about which stories are acceptable and which ones aren't, particularly if one wants to get ahead. Imagine that a reporter does a story on the Internet that is recognized by management as being both well done and relevant. That reporter is likely to revisit the subject from time to time. Now if the same reporter's bosses tell him the story was fine but didn't seem relevant to most readers, he's much less likely to do similar stories. Although in both cases the comments of the bosses may have been motivated by self-interest, the reporter has no way of knowing this. This is just one example of how media workers learn the rules of the game.

Gatekeeping

There is an alternate (or more likely, complementary) explanation for why newspapers with an on-line presence are more likely to play up on-line-related topics. To understand this explanation, it is helpful to review the concept of the gatekeeper. It's the job of media decision-makers to "winnow down the larger number of potential messages to a few" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 105). The idea of the gatekeeper was first applied to mass media by White (1950). "The community shall hear as fact only those events the newsman, as a representative of his culture, believes to be true" (p. 390). In other words, this is a subjective process. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that a journalist's background and

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personal characteristics will affect content to the extent to which she has authority within the organization. For example, if an editor is confronted with a story that suggests the Internet is all the rage, she's going to compare this to her perception of the world. If she works for a paper that recently went on line itself, the story is more likely to seem relevant than if she doesn't. This makes a good deal of sense. Ask five people to describe what a backyard looks like, and they're each likely to describe their own. A number of scholars over the years have suggested that the opinions and/or experiences of journalists can shape the news (Bleske, 1991; Chang & Lee, 1992; Ankney, Heilman & Kolff, 1996; Flegel & Chaffee, 1971; Grey, 1966; Merritt & Gross, 1978).

Summary

There are several reasons to believe that newspapers with an on-line presence are more likely to cover on-line topics than those that don't have an on-line presence. For starters, the former group has the financial incentive to promote general use of on-line services, while the later group has a disincentive to do so. History suggests newspapers have reacted similarly in the past. Although it's possible that reporters and editors knowingly promote their company's financial interests at the cost of editorial integrity, it's also possible that media workers are unknowingly responding to the financially motivated cues of their superiors. Another possible explanation is the subjective world of media gatekeepers. Editors and reporters working at organizations with an on-line presence may find such technology more interesting or relevant than those who do not.

H1: Newspapers that have a significant on-line presence will provide more coverage of the Internet in their traditional publications than will those newspapers that aren't online themselves.

Method

To test the idea that newspapers with an on-line presence provide more coverage of the Internet than those without a presence on the world wide web, a content analysis of 30 newspapers was conducted using Nexis. Specifically, Nexis searched for stories where the word "Internet" appeared in the headline. Twenty of the papers had a significant on-line presence and the remaining 10 did not. By significant on-line presence, it's meant that the newspaper offers some news content online. This content may represent some or all of the content found in the traditional paper or may be created specifically for on-line readers. What didn't qualify was an e-mail address for letters to the editor or a web page aimed at selling advertising space or subscriptions.

The decision to search by headline was made for practical reasons. Preliminary key word searches tended to come up with large numbers of stories that mentioned the world wide web in passing but were primarily about another topic. For example, the *Des Moines Register* alone ran more than 1,000 stories that mentioned the world wide web in a span of less than two years. (Use of the word "Internet" was even more prevalent.) Because there is less likelihood of happenstance, focusing on stories where the primary topic is the Internet, as judged by the headline, is a truer measure of whether a newspaper is trumpeting the topic than is simply coding for mentions of the world wide web. "A headline is an important barometer of what editors feel is most important in the news, as it is used to draw attention about a story and single out its key points" (Wattenberg, 1994, p. 93).

As stated above, coverage was determined by the number of stories found by Nexis to mention "Internet" in the headline. Only letters to the editor and news briefs of less than 150 words were excluded. In addition to counting the number of stories on the topic, the average word count was also determined. Independent one-tailed t-tests were run for the number of stories and average word count to determine if the differences between newspapers with an on-line presence and those without were statistically significant.

The newspapers were selected using a stratified random sample. The starting point was a list of the 100 largest U.S. newspapers (by average daily circulation) compiled by *Editor & Publisher*. These papers were divided into two groups: those with a significant on-line presence and those without. It was then determined that of these papers available on Nexis, 35 had an on-line presence and 10 did not. All 10 papers in the later group were selected and 20 newspapers in the former group were randomly selected. As a starting point for determining if a newspaper was online, *Editor & Publisher's* regularly updated list of newspapers with an on-line presence on its web site was consulted. Newspapers not on the list were contacted by phone to avoid oversights.

The time frame for the study was six months: May 1, 1996 through Oct. 31, 1996. A great many newspapers went online themselves in late 1995 or early 1996. The desire was to only include newspapers that had either been online the entire period of time under consideration or hadn't been online at all during that time. To keep the sample size from becoming too small the decision was made to limit the amount of time under consideration.

Because the bulk of the data collection was accomplished by computer, there was relatively little room for human error. However, intercoder reliability was tested to ensure that stories were being counted properly and that duplicates were weeded out. In a test of 126 cases (representing 11 percent of the total study), coders agreed 95 percent of the time.

Results

As indicated in Table 1, the newspapers examined devoted a good deal of attention to topics relating to the Internet. The newspapers ran an average of 39 stories that included the word "Internet" in the headline during the six-month study period. Put another way, that's roughly one story every five days. This is a somewhat startling figure considering the specificity of the search.

Table 1 about here

To place things in context, an additional Nexis search indicates that during the first six months of 1993, *The New York Times* ran just two stories with "Internet" in the headline. The newspaper ran 129 such stories in the first six months of 1996.

Table 2 about here

One thing quickly becomes clear after even the most cursory review of Table 2: Whether a newspaper is online itself is not an absolute predictor of how much coverage it will give to stories about the Internet. Although the dozen papers with the most coverage of the Internet all were online themselves, the two papers with the least coverage also have a presence on the Internet. The *New York Daily News* and *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* ran four and five stories, respectively. The *Milwaukee Journal* ran 90 articles that included Internet in the headline, the most of any newspaper. The *Washington Post* was second with 86. The longest articles (an average of 1,090 words) appeared in the *Washington Post,* and the shortest stories (420 words on average) appeared in the *Milwaukee Journal*. Both newspapers are online.

Table 3 about here

Although there isn't universally a direct link between a newspaper being on the Internet itself and the amount of coverage it provides of the Internet, as Table 3 indicates, there does appear to be a correlation. The difference in the number of Internet stories newspapers in the two categories ran is statistically significant. Newspapers online themselves averaged 44.30 stories with "Internet" in the headline over the course of six months. That's roughly one story every four days. By comparison, papers without a significant presence on the Internet averaged 28.40 stories each.

On average, Internet-related stories running in newspapers with an on-line presence were 77 words longer than similar stories running in newspapers without a presence on the

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Internet. However, this difference wasn't statistically significant.

Despite the fact all newspapers selected were ranked among the 100 largest, as Table 3 indicates, there was also found to be a statistically significant difference in terms of the size of the two groups. Each newspaper was assigned a rank based on where it fell on *Editor & Publisher's* list of the 100 largest daily newspapers. The average ranking for papers in the on-line group was 33.65, compared with an average ranking of 58.50 for newspapers without an on-line presence.

Table 4 about here

Post-hoc analysis was performed to take newspaper size into account. The newspapers were divided into two groups (top 50 newspapers in one group, papers from the second 50 in the other) and an independent two-tailed t-test was run to compare the average number of Internet stories for newspapers in the two size groups. Although newspapers in the larger group did indeed tend to run more stories, as Table 4 shows, the difference wasn't statistically significant.

Discussion

The content analysis of six months of coverage in 30 newspapers indicates support for the hypothesis: Newspapers with a significant on-line presence provide more coverage of the Internet in their traditional publications than do those newspapers that aren't online. Newspapers in the former group published an average of nearly 16 more stories about the Internet than did newspapers in the later group. Newspapers with a presence on the Internet also tended to run longer stories, although the difference wasn't statistically significant.

Two reasons were offered earlier to explain why newspapers with a presence on the Internet might provide more coverage of the general topic than papers without a significant on-line presence. First, members of the first group have an economic incentive to promote the technology. Many were driven online by the fear of someday losing both subscribers and advertisers to the Internet. But for now, newspapers are more likely to be losing money than making money off their Internet venture. It's easy to see how such newspapers would have an economic incentive to promote general awareness of the Internet. Conversely, newspapers not online have an economic incentive to limit the amount of coverage they give to this competing medium.

An alternate, or perhaps more likely, complementary explanation is that gatekeepers at newspapers with an on-line presence are more likely to be familiar with and see the day-to-day usefulness of the Internet than are similar news workers at papers without a presence on the Internet. The findings certainly do nothing to argue against either explanation. However, the findings seem to suggest that there are additional variables in operation, at least at some papers. That seems the most likely explanation for why two papers with a presence on the Internet accounted for only 11 stories between them. Of course, it only makes sense that this might be the case. The extent to which editorial decisions are influenced by economic factors is bound to vary from newspaper to newspaper and day to day. Plus, nobody operates in a vacuum. Management at a newspaper that recently went online may be reluctant to run too many Internet stories for fear of being labeled biased. The simple introduction of the Internet as a research tool in the newsroom could cause gatekeepers to view the Internet differently, even if the newspaper has no immediate plans to go online itself. As for economic incentives to increase coverage of the Internet, the hope of snagging advertisers from the ever-increasing ranks of Internet-related companies might be a good enough one for some.

So long as additional factors remain undiscovered, it remains possible that the suspected relationship between a newspaper's presence on the Internet and its increased coverage of the topic may simply be the byproduct of a more important variable. One such variable the author has attempted to rule out is the size of the newspaper. An independent two-tailed t-test found no significant difference in the number of Internet stories run in newspapers ranked in the top 50 by circulation compared with papers from the second 50. The fact that the newspaper with the most stories (*Milwaukee Journal*) ranked 52nd in size and the paper with the fewest stories (*New York Daily News*) ranked sixth in size, further supports the contention that a newspaper's size isn't an important predictor of its Internet coverage.

Among this study's flaws are a couple that ought to be considered when discussing possible future research in this area. The first is the challenge of judging the size of each newspaper's news hole when conducting a search through Nexis. It may be that certain newspapers cover all sorts of topics more than others simply because they have more space. Additional measures of the importance a newspaper places on Internet-related topics would be useful. Besides measuring the news hole, it would seem to make sense to study placement of stories, focusing on how prominently stories are featured. An examination of how the two types of newspapers frame Internet stories also seems logical.

Given the somewhat artificial nature of searching headlines for a single word, it would seem to make sense for future studies to more broadly define what coverage of the Internet means. Including more search words and looking at entire stories would be a good place to start. A broader sampling frame that would allow for a larger sample also seems prudent.

Regardless of the specifics of future studies, the area seems ripe for additional research. We are witnessing what some have called a technological revolution. "Moments of transition allow students of media the opportunity to reconsider their most basic assumptions, gaining fresh insights into the old technology and setting the stage for understanding the new one" (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996, p. 13). If that's true, how newspapers choose to cover this revolution should prove telling.

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Table 1. Means and standard deviations for number of stories about the world wide web and average word count.*

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
No. of stories	39	21.12	30
Ave. word count	643	138.18	30

* Coverage examined from May 1, 1996 through Oct. 31, 1996.

Table 2. Variables by individual newspaper.

Paper	Online?	No. of stories	Ave. word count
Boston Herald	N	22	503
Buffalo News	N	24	627
Cincinnati Enquirer	N	34	609
Des Moines Register	N	41	691
Commercial Appeal (Memphis)	N	40	541
Fresno Bee	N	26	506
Omaha World-Herald	N	26	545
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	N	41	740
Sarasota Herald-Tribune	N	15	574
Tennessean (Nashville)	N	15	578
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	Y	5	801
Asbury Park Press	Y	20	550
Boston Globe	Y	45	633
Courier-Journal (Louisville)	Y	44	786
Dallas Morning News	Y	75	667
Hartford Courant	Y	48	560
Houston Chronicle	Y	38	647
Milwaukee Journal	Y	90	420
Newsday	Y	35	934
New York Daily News	Y	4	603
Orange County Register	Y	57	687
Orlando Sentinel	Y	48	557
Richmond Times-Dispatch	Y	22	586
Riverside Press-Enterprise	Y	23	654
San Diego Union Tribune	Y	51	747
Seattle Times	Y	47	795
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Y	33	583
Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale)	Y	55	557
USA Today	Y	60	509
Washington Post	Y	86	1090

Table 3. Independent one-tailed t-tests for coverage and circulation variables.

	Newspaper Type				
Variables	Online Means (&SD) (N=20)	Not Online Means (&SD) (N=10)	t value	df	significance
No. of stories	44.30 (23.32)	28.40 (10.08)	2.05	28	p<.03
Ave. word count	668.33 (155.67)	591.32 (77.33)	1.47	28	ns
Ranking by circulation*	33.65 (23.32)	58.50 (21.70)	2.81	28	p<.01

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* Based on the "Editor & Publisher 1995 Yearbook" ranking of the 100 largest daily newspapers (by circulation) in the country. The smaller the number, the larger the newspaper.

Table 4. Independent two-tailed t-test for story count by paper size.

	Newspaper Type				
Variables	Top 50 Means (&SD) (N=18)	Second 50 Means (&SD) (N=12)	t value	df	significance
No. of stories	43.94 (19.40)	31.58 (10.08)	1.57	28	ns

IS THE 'WOMEN'S SECTION' AN ANACHRONISM?

AFFINITY FOR AND AMBIVALENCE ABOUT THE *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*'S WOMANEWS

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RUNNING HEAD: WOMANEWS

Note: This study was funded by the James M. Cox Jr. Institute for Newspaper Management Studies at The University of Georgia. Dr. Peggy J. Kreshel of the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at UGA conducted one of two focus groups discussed in this paper; Livia Staddon Wade of the Grady College compiled results of the media-use survey completed by focus-group participants.

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IS THE 'WOMEN'S SECTION' AN ANACHRONISM? AFFINITY FOR AND AMBIVALENCE ABOUT THE *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*'S WOMANEWS

Analysis of interviews with staff of the *Chicago Tribune*'s WomaNews and reader focus groups suggests women's sections can help to retain women readers and increase the visibility of women in newspapers.

However, the study warned the "women's" label undermines the section's success by appearing to:

- exclude men from coverage of substantive issues affecting women,
- reinforce stereotypes of women,
- create a "women's news ghetto," and
- attract advertising that conflicts with editorial content, thereby alienating women readers.

Is the 'Women's Section' an Anachronism?
Affinity for and Ambivalence About the *Chicago Tribune*'s WomaNews

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What Do Women Want? The title of a recent Knight-Ridder readership report[1] underscores the problematic nature of the newspaper's relationship with women. This once-loyal readership group continues to drop out of newspaper reading at a significantly accelerated rate compared to men. Readership of daily newspapers by women declined 18 percent between 1970-1990, compared to men's 12.5-percent drop, according to a 1991 Newspaper Advertising Bureau study. The Newspaper Association of America reported in 1994 that "significant gender differences persist" among newspaper readers: "Men continue to outpace women in readership of daily newspapers, with 63.5% (vs. 59.5% of women) reading one on the average weekday."[2]

Attempts to attract and retain women readers have focused on type of content and nature of approach. Some newspapers increased coverage of so-called "women's issues" — health, parenting, careers and relationships — and, thus, "mainstreamed" women's news in regular sections. Other papers, guided by research that indicates women are more likely than men to focus on relationships, changed reporting and packaging of their content to highlight the people behind the news. A Knight-Ridder daily restructured reporters' coverage areas to focus more on people than institutions, creating "thematic beats with non-institutional names like 'kinship,' 'workplace,' 'quality of life' and 'passages.'"[3] The *Charlotte* (N.C.) *Observer*, "after combing the research on what women readers say they want," created a section that viewed news through the filter of connections and relationships, "Connect."[4]

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[1] Marty Claus, "What Do Women Want? Here Are Highlights from the Knight-Ridder Task Force Report," presented at the Georgia Press Institute, Athens, GA, 1994.
[2] "The Daily & Sunday Newspaper Audience: Major Demographic Segments," 1994 *Newspaper Association of America Report*, v.

Several newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, took the relatively risky and potentially politically incorrect step of reviving the women's section. The once-popular sections — which concentrated on the four F's of food, fashion, family and furnishings, or hearth and home[5] — provided readers with sought-after connections with other women: "No matter how remote to her life, a woman can identify with a woman," Epstein observed.[6] However, most sections were eliminated in the early 1970s amid feminist charges of sexism in news coverage and social changes brought about by the women's movement; women's pages were depicted as a news "ghetto" of trivial information.[7]

The continual loss of women readers may be attributable to the elimination of women's pages, one industry leader suggested: "We may have thrown the baby out with the bath water when we stopped women's sections

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[3] Karen Schmidt and Colleen Collins, "Showdown at Gender Gap: Newspapers are Scrambling to Find New Ways to Attract Women Readers," *American Journalism Review* (July/August 1993), 41.

[4] Sandy Will, "Focusing on Relationships is One Way to Reach Out to Women Readers," *American Society of Newspaper Editors Bulletin* (April 1993), 8.

[5] Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media, Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet, eds., New York: Oxford University Press.

[6] Laurily Keir, *Women and the News* (NY: Hastings House, 1978), 40.

[7] When women's sections were transformed into non-gender-specific "lifestyle" sections, entertainment coverage supplanted much of the news for and about women. Since then, nnewspapers have been "courting women with 'News Lite' — jazzy, bouncy, extra tacked-on features," wrote Naomi Wolf in *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century* (NY: Random House, 1993), 90; "Women know that they are being cheated," 90.

25 years ago. That area was taken over by women's magazines."[8] In fact, then and today, women are avid readers of books and magazines[9] — niche publications with an explicit gender appeal. Furthermore, research indicates women are alienated by "male" characteristics of mainstream daily newspaper coverage shaped by news values that emphasize conflict and hierarchy rather than connection and consensus.[10]

WomaNews: Reviving the women's section

The *Chicago Tribune*'s prototype women's section, WomaNews, was tested by focus groups studies conducted in 1989 and 1990 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Reaction of women in the groups echoed criticism of the 1970s; women "strongly hated the concept before they saw the section" because they thought it "might be patronizing; they thought staff members on the section might be treated as second-class citizens, and they thought one section couldn't possibly span the current diversity of women's lives."[11] However, when women saw the prototype, they were enthusiastic. The 14-page section included lengthy coverage of women newsmakers, an in-depth story on a turning point in a woman's life, columns on relationships

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[8] Janet Meyers, "Papers Re-invent Women's Section," *Advertising Age* (April 16, 1990), 57.

[9] See, for example, Susan Miller, "Opportunity Squandered — Newspapers and Women's News," *Media Studies Journal* 7 (winter/spring 1993), 167.

[10] Donna Allen, "Women News: Half the Population Isn't Adequately Served by Traditional Media," *The Quill* 79 (May 1991), 36-37. See also Caitlin Kelly, "The Great Paper Chase: Losing Women Readers, The Dailies Try to Win Us Back," *Ms.* (May/June 1993), 34-35. For a discussion of how women are socialized from childhood to value consensus, equality and a spirit of community — and therefore seek connections with others — see Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (NY: Ballentine, 1990). For an examination of how news values in use at U.S. media organizations serve to alienate women readers, see for example Marion Beasley, "Newspapers: Is There a New Majority Defining the News?" in *Women in Mass Communication: Challenging Gender Values* (CA; Sage Publications, 1989), 180-184.

[11] Kristin McGrath, "Women and Newspapers," *Newspaper Research Journal* 14 (spring 1993), 107.

(including parenting) and careers and "a page devoted to classified ads for services such as baby-sitting, child care, fitness and children's parties."[12]

The mixed feelings of the women focus-group participants about the return of the women's pages — loathing the concept but liking the execution — were, and continue to be reflected in observations from industry leaders: "Please don't tell me that in a gender-obsessed world, a women's section won't emphasize the perceived and demeaning differences that women are struggling to erase," wrote Knight-Ridder executive Marty Claus.[13] However, newspaper consultant Nancy Woodhull countered, "Where it's done right, it's very effective . . . . (but) I don't think women's sections are the end-all. We also need to mainstream women. You have to be really careful that the result isn't ghettoizing women."[14]

The recycled "women's section" — which revives dim memories of stereotypical treatment of women in newspapers — raises questions about its ability to attract and retain women readers:

> The question is not whether newspapers have changed, but whether they've evolved enough to keep pace with lifestyles and interests . . . . Most social observers believe women's lives and attitudes have changed far more dramatically than men's. While women may not yet have equal power, they do have a sense of entitlement; they speak out when they're being patronized, treated unfairly or ignored; they firmly believe they deserve respect and when they don't get it, they take their business elsewhere.[15]

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[12] Janet Meyers, see Note 8 above, 57.

[13] Karen Schmidt and Colleen Collins, "Showdown At Gender Gap: Newspapers Are Scrambling To Find New Ways to Attract Women Readers," *American Journalism Review* (July/August, 1993), 40. The authors report that newspapers can appeal to women by restructuring beats to cover issues instead of buildings and institutions, including multiple viewpoints and opinions, focus on who is affected and running "women's issues" on page one. Kristin MaGrath reports WomaNews pleased women in focus groups conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1989 and 1990 in part because the section was personal and easy to read, took women seriously and provided a woman's angle, as well as leisure-time reading, in "Women and Newspapers," *Newspaper Research Journal* 14 (spring 1993), 107.

[14] Schmidt and Collins, see note 13 above, 42.

[15] Susan Miller, "Opportunity Squandered — Newspapers and Women's News," *Media Studies Journal* 7 (winter/spring, 1993), 178.

What do women want in their newspapers — mainstreamed coverage for and about women, special sections, both? The newspaper industry, intensely interested in regaining its once-strong standing with women readers, is watching the women's section closely, hoping for a possible remedy. Research continues to be conducted on women's reactions to women's sections, providing helpful directions for content, tone and approach.

Yet, industry experts appear to be mired in an unusual state of ambivalence about the efficacy of women's sections in attracting or retaining women readers. Paradoxically, supporters of *separate* sections frequently advocate "mainstreaming;" enthusiasm for attracting women with targeted content is often tempered by doubts about "ghettoizing" the news. Journalists worry that the very *naming* of the section will alienate women — and men. One of five editors to steer the doomed *Her New York*, a weekly newspaper for women launched in late September 1993 and closed in February 1994, illustrated the ambivalence commonly associated with women's sections and frequently connected in some manner with the reaction of men:

> I think from a marketing point of view it's actually brilliant. . . . But the larger question? I'm just not sure women really need a special newspaper. If you announced a newspaper for men, there'd be a terrible reaction.[16]

Given the success of the *Chicago Tribune*'s WomaNews as an advertising and editorial product — three years after its launch, 60 papers carried its syndicated copy — and its relative longevity as a "resurrected" woman's section, it was selected as the focus of this research with the assumption that findings could clarify the potential role and contribution of women's pages to the industry. The study sought first to examine the creation and development of WomaNews at the *Tribune*, and second to obtain and report internal (staff) and external (reader) perceptions of the section. The study sought not only to assess the section's ability to attract or retain women readers through gender-targeted content, but also to address the larger question of the inherent value, if any, of a gender-specific section to readers.

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[16] Betsy Israel, "Pages of Their Own? Rekindling the Debate: Do Women Really Need a Separate Press?," *The New York Times*, 3 October 1993, Sec. 9, 10.

THE STUDY

Research questions

1. What are the staff perceptions of the role and value of WomaNews at the *Tribune*?
2. Do WomaNews staff and readers perceive women's sections to be an effective method of appealing to women readers?

Methodology

The study, conducted in August 1994, was one part of a multifaceted, long-term research project focusing on women's readership and examined the first 40 months of WomaNews. Research consisted of two primary components:

(1) **Depth interviews** conducted by the author with four key staff members: Owen Youngman, supervising editor of WomaNews and the *Tribune*'s features editor; Marjorie David, founding editor of WomaNews; Marla Krause, editor of WomaNews; and Barbara Brotman, the section's only staff columnist, featured each week on the section front. The interviews, all of which were tape-recorded, were conducted either in a meeting room or in staff members' offices within the *Chicago Tribune* building August 29 and 30,

1994. Transcribed by a graduate student, the taped interviews generated 99 pages of transcripts, which were coded and analyzed by the author.

(2) **Two focus groups** of eight and 10 women readers of WomaNews, respectively, who were recruited by a suburban research firm from a random sample of women subscribers provided by the newspaper's marketing department. The firm screened participants; women readers were eligible if they had read at least two of four weekly sections during the past month and considered themselves to be "regular readers."

Providing accommodations for focus group sessions, the company also audio taped both two-hour sessions, held August 29, 1994. The author and a colleague each conducted a session, referring to a reader moderator guide to ensure that (a) all relevant areas were covered and (b) session analyses would be comparable. Prior to the start of the session, each of the 18 women in two groups completed a three-page media-usage survey which included several demographic questions (see Appendix A). Audio tapes, transcribed by a graduate student, generated two sets of transcripts, each 40 pages in length, which were analyzed by the author. Data from the media surveys were compiled by an administrative assistant working with the author.

Data analysis

Data from transcripts of interviews and focus groups were analyzed by the author using the line-by-line and phrase-by-phrase open-coding technique proposed by Strauss.[17] Codes and concepts that emerged from the data were grouped into categories and later collapsed into core categories of relevance to the participants.

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[17] A. L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

FINDINGS

Women's Ambivalence: The Launch of WomaNews

Mixed messages abound in the story of the women's section at the *Chicago Tribune* — from the opening chapter. The architect of the *Tribune*'s resurrected women's section was once associated with eliminating them. Colleen "Cokie" Dishon, who was features editor when she designed the colorful Sunday WomaNews section in 1991, was "credited, paradoxically, with dismantling old-style women's sections at *The Milwaukee Sentinel* and the *Chicago Daily News*."[18] Dishon designed the successful Sunday "paper within a paper" primarily to deliver sought-after women readers to advertisers, said founding editor Marjorie David.[19]

David, who was 47 when interviewed at the *Tribune*, steered WomaNews' coverage from its first edition through September 1993. She remembered the section's hostile reception by fellow journalists and readers: "The gut reaction was very negative," she said — until the section was read, when the response generally turned to enthusiasm.

As editor, David focused on news and eschewed trivialized fare; one of her significant additions was the column Washington Watch, which covered legislation, court rulings and "information that affects women that we'd never get coverage of (in other sections)."[20] Content was chosen for its appeal to a diverse readership: homemakers raising children, women in the workforce raising children, single women.

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[18] Betsy Israel, see note 16 above. The *Tribune*'s move was far from radical, however; a section explicitly targeting women had existed since the mid-1980s, when *Tribune* research first warned of declining readership among women. In response, Marjorie David, then an assistant editor on the Lifestyle section, created Tempo Woman, sewing the seeds of the WomaNews to come. Several regular TW features were carried over to WomaNews, the name of TW's standing head for news briefs.

[19] Owen Youngman, and Marla Krause, in personal interviews with the author, 30 August and 29 August 1994, respectively.

[20] David, in a personal interview with the author, 30 August, 1994.

Untroubled by the notion of a section explicitly targeted to women, David wondered why the inclusion of "woman" in the name caused considerable consternation among some journalists and readers: "That's kind of interesting that that should be so political. Like if we'd named it something that . . . meant nothing, like . . . 'Feather,' or Tennessee. They've politicized the area by calling it what it is." She saw WomaNews as comparable to other interest-specific sections: "[T]here are sections like sports, which are just for people who are interested in sports, there's a section for business which (is) obviously targeted for people who are interested in business, so you know where you can find business news. Why is this a problem?"[21]

Furthermore, in response to the oft-repeated question, "Where's the man's section," David laughed: "There could be a men's section. And it was actually on the drawing board. It was — Cokie (Colleen Dishon) was thinking about it."[22]

David characterized the contribution of the woman's section to the *Tribune* during her tenure as editor as significant in elevating the presence of women in its pages:

> . . . .[A]ny minority is going to be powerless unless it has a voice, and that's what we're doing is providing a voice. Or providing a physical sounding board, a place, a focus where we are covering stories that weren't getting done . . . . Women weren't at the table to bring them into the discussion. We started to push the door a little wider open.[23]

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[21] David, see note 20 above.
[22] David, see note 20 above.
[23] David, see note 20 above.

However, underscoring the ambivalence commonly associated with women's sections of the 1990s, David was one of many who hoped the successful section would become unnecessary — after convincing management that women's issues were newsworthy:

> I saw people on the train that three days later were still reading the section . . . so I kept telling myself that this is something that . . . is filling an important need. And we said at the time, 'Maybe this won't last forever, and maybe what this will do is open the door for the rest of the newspaper to change. Right now this is a crucial thing, because these things aren't perceived as important enough to cover (in other sections).'"[24]

David fought an uphill battle to gain colleagues' acceptance of WomaNews: "Our biggest problem is our own fellow journalists. Fellow journalists don't like it, didn't understand it." However, she contended that the *Tribune* needed a women's section until coverage of women pervades the newspaper and is accepted by colleagues of both genders: "I think it's a good thing until we are full partners in the world . . . . [M]en have a very hard time listening to women's ideas about stories, and they don't hear them as stories, and they might not necessarily shout you down, but they don't hear you anymore. In a lot of meetings it's just as if you're talking to a wall."[25]

Women's Ambivalence: The Staff of WomaNews

A strong advocate of WomaNews, 23-year *Chicago Tribune* veteran Owen Youngman was 11 months into his job as features editor when interviewed in his office at the *Tribune*. His responsibilities included WomaNews, the paper's magazine, television book and sections covering the arts, books, food, travel, home, children and four geographically zoned additions. Youngman joined the paper in its sports department in 1971, the year the *Tribune* contributed to the national trend of changing women's pages to lifestyle sections.

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[24] David, see note 20 above.
[25] David, see note 20 above.

Youngman said women's sections are necessary in the 1990s in order to ensure that women's viewpoints are represented — not only in WomaNews, but also "mainstreamed" through other sections:

> A lot of (political) stories, although they are of concern to women, aren't about women, *per se*, or don't go out of their way to seek the women's perspective if there is one, if it's appropriate to seek one. So there's a role for a section in the newspaper that starts from that point, OK? We can't change the world, but we can view the world through a different prism and we can deliver information of value. Not 'ghettoized' — we hope that the best stories are still distributed throughout the newspaper — but gathered and edited so that someone seeking that perspective can reliably find it in the newspaper.[26]

Not everyone shared his support of women's pages, however. The section's primary staff members — Marla Krause, 42, David's successor as editor, and Barbara Brotman, 38, the section's only staff columnist — opposed its creation and were initially reluctant to join WomaNews. It resurrected memories of coverage they had once worked hard to leave behind earlier in their journalistic careers.

Krause was the first woman to work in the *Tribune* sports department, where she met Youngman. She moved to news editor, then associate city editor — "hard news" positions — before switching to the "soft-news" realm of the *Tribune* magazine for three years in order to better accommodate the schedules of her two young children. In December 1993, Youngman appointed her WomaNews editor; she had been in the position eight months when interviewed for this study.

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[26] Owen Youngman, in a personal interview with the author, 30 August 1994.

Krause and Brotman's perceptions of the role and value of WomaNews — to the *Tribune* itself and to its readers — reflected those of readers and industry leaders reported earlier in this paper. In contrast to their supervising editor, the women who shaped the section each week indicated they had conflicting feelings about the inclusion of a woman's section in a mass-circulation daily newspaper.

Like many journalists at the paper, Krause remembers she was anything *but* ambivalent when WomaNews was created in 1991. She saw the section as a return to the stereotypical, traditional women's coverage:

> . . . [W]hat kind of message does (creating a women's section) send out to people? I mean, I was completely against it when they started it. I was insulted. (I had) the feeling, why do I need, why do I need my own section? . . . . I'm a well-rounded, educated woman — I don't need a woman's section. What are you going to give me? Recipes, society news?[27]

Brotman was a columnist for the paper's Tempo features section when Youngman asked her to join WomaNews to lend prestige to the section. She, too, was opposed to WomaNews from the start; she couldn't envision news that would appeal to only one gender and was troubled that its name in effect shut out half of its potential readership.

> . . . I sort of philosophically objected to the idea of a woman's section at all. . . . I felt that having a woman's section is backward. Why are we segregating news about women? Why aren't you letting men read it? Why shouldn't men read about breast cancer? Why shouldn't men read about abortion?[28]

Especially problematic for the columnist was that she didn't view *herself* primarily in terms of gender:

> I don't define myself as being a woman. . . . What are women like? What are the essences of women? . . . . I don't care that much about

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[27] Marla Krause, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.
[28] Barbara Brotman, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.

> being a woman. I mean, I am a woman — like I have brown hair. But I don't go around saying, 'What's it like to be a brown-haired person?' . . . . I think of myself as a parent — that might be a more primary thing — but I don't think I'm that different from my husband. And the things I write about, I think, could be written by a man.[29]

Like Krause, Brotman was reluctant to make the move from the "mainstream" feature section Tempo to WomaNews, feeling she would be perceived as moving down the career ladder despite her increased visibility as the section's only staff columnist. "I thought that it was segregated sexually, and by its very nature it was sort of second rate," she said, later adding, "That was certainly my fear . . . that I would be considered second class."[30] Writing for women's sections was a career step she was eager to move past:

> I've written for our women's sections before, years ago, and I felt like, 'I've done this,' and I fought very hard to get out of it. I really fought hard not to write for a women's section. And it felt — I thought, 'I don't want to go backwards here.'[31]

WomaNews content: Gender-specific for 'mainstream' readership

The 1990s version of women's pages, WomaNews, bore little resemblance to its predecessors when Youngman took over the *Tribune*'s features sections. The modern-day section didn't carry recipes, nor did it trivialize women's news. However, Krause disliked its tone, which she described as "stridency permeated," humorless and portraying women as oppressed victims.[32] Youngman said content was "too argumentative and dogmatic" and characterized men unfavorably.[33] By way of example, he cited its regular column, "Turning Point," that focuses on a particular moment that changes a person's life: "I think that every person has an epiphany.

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[29] Brotman, see note 29 above.
[30] Brotman, see note 29 above.
[31] Brotman, see note 29 above.
[32] Marla Krause, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.
[33] Owen Youngman, in an interview with the author, 30 August 1994.

I don't think that for every person the moment of epiphany is 'the day I discovered men were scum.' They should know that going in. That's not a bulletin."[34]

A positive relationship between genders appeared to be especially valued by the new WomaNews staff. In fact, when pioneer feminist Gloria Steinem was coming to Chicago to promote her latest book, the moderate Krause says she and Brotman were nonplussed:

> We didn't know what to do with her. She was in town reading from her new book, so Barbara (Brotman) and I sat down and said, 'OK, who wants to read the five zillionth Gloria Steinem story' — you know, now that she's 60, she's got a new book, you know, right, this is just a snore . . .
>
> She's a stereotype at this point, so we try to pull it into, 'How does this relate to your life?' You know, what does the whole feminist movement mean to you . . . . [I]f someone says, 'Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?,' a lot of women will say no. It seems (to have) such a man-hating, bra-burning connotation to it.[35]

The section should not function as a predictable booster of a well-worn ideology, Krause said, but should instead provide options for women readers and create a middle ground that is not associated with extremes:

> . . . Maybe the whole idea of being a woman or being a feminist isn't just so 'left' or 'right.' You can work and have a family but you don't have to hate men.[36]

In fact, Krause and Brotman indicated they particularly valued work relationships with male colleagues. The one male on the five-person WomaNews staff — who managed the "international cartel of free-lancers" for the section — was a valued sounding board for Krause. Brotman routinely swapped story ideas with male reporters and was troubled that working for a section for women weakened her ties with male friends and readers.

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[34] Owen Youngman, see note 33 above.
[35] Marla Krause, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.
[36] Marla Krause, see note 36 above.

> I don't like the symbolism of saying this is only for women. And I don't personally like writing only for women. I feel bad that my male colleagues might be less likely to read me now. I feel bad that my male friends might be less likely to read me now — I want to appeal to everyone, and *I don't want to be pigeonholed as a 'woman's writer'*[37] (emphasis added).

'The big tent' and WomaNews: Conflicting observations

WomaNews' ability to deliver a target market of women consumers to advertisers was a factor in creating the section; [38] but Brotman saw this segmentation of readership as undermining the sense of community a mass medium can engender.

> I think it's an unfortunate trend that everything's become segregated. . . . . What I've always liked about the newspapers is the sort of, the great, it sort of encompasses everything, it's sort of the big tent — it can take in everyone . . . . I would have liked the paper to be a force, saying that we're all one community, that we read the same paper.[39]

Krause said she tries to provide all the target readers in this community with a sense of mass medium's breadth, albeit on the small scale of a 10-page weekly section.

> . . . [I]It's a paper within a paper, because we have news, we have features, we have fashion, we have opinion, we have essays . . . we'll have business stories, or stories about sports celebrities, so it's like there's a little bit of everything.[40]

Despite columnist Brotman's lack of support for a woman's section and her desire to reach women *and* men with her work, she admitted to feeling ambivalent about WomaNews's contribution to readers. While she repeatedly said subject matter should not be associated with one gender, Brotman observed that women and men can perceive issues differently.

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[37] Barbara Brotman, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.

[38] David, Youngman, Krause and Brotman said in personal interviews with the author that advertising was the catalyst behind WomaNews.

[39] Brotman, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.

[40] Krause, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994. For a more thorough description of content, see Appendix B.

> I sometimes do think that there is a women's perspective, and that stories would be done differently if they come from a woman. *So I sort of am a little ambivalent about it, too* [emphasis added]. I did a column about the first day of kindergarten and I just got a call about it from a woman who works at the (Chicago) *Sun-Times* and she was saying, 'Men just don't understand this.' She's been a hard-news woman for many years now and she's saying, 'Men wouldn't understand this.' I sort of agree with her.[41]

And, despite editor Krause's early opposition to the concept of a woman's section and her initial reluctance to steer WomaNews, she said she is convinced a woman's section is necessary. Like Youngman, she doesn't believe women would see the totality of their interests reflected in the mainstream newspaper.

> Should there be one? I'd say yes. Because if there's not a women's section, the stories on women's issues, parenting concerns, relationships, women's profiles and interesting women . . . the women's health issues, that won't be in the paper, that won't be covered.[42]

If the fate of WomaNews were in Brotman's hands, she would "lean toward killing it," she said, and run stories in the feature section Tempo. But some of her friends liked WomaNews, which increased her internal conflict about the value of women's sections. She was also aware of the shortage of space in any daily newspaper in the '90s and the luxury of being afforded an entire section for news. Brotman was torn:

> I don't know. I don't know. I mean, you know, now I've seen the space devoted to these stories and I like it. I really — *I'm ambivalent* [emphasis added]. Which is a lot different than I was four months ago . . . . I would have said, 'Fold it.' But there's just a lot of stuff — there's

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[41] Brotman, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.

[42] Marla Krause, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994,

> a lot of stuff in there that I know wouldn't get into the paper. There isn't space. There just isn't space. So I might keep it.
>
> I might change the name. I don't know. I might soften the 'Woman,' I don't know . . . because I don't want to turn the men off, and yet, it's a section for women.

Tribune staff members also recognized the importance of creating strong ties with women and keeping sought-after women readers in the fold. Engaging WomaNews' readers emotionally and intellectually is an inherent function of the personal column, Brotman noted; she admitted that women, more than men, value this connection.

> I know that having a column like this, people have said there's nothing else like this. And it's more women who will think that. Because it's more personal — it hits them personally. The rest of the paper is more impersonal, the news stories. OK, this is about how you feel when you take your kids to kindergarten for the first time. And I have been told there's nothing else like this in the newspaper.
>
> I feel that draws people. That people really want . . . a personal connection. They want to feel something — they want to be affected emotionally. They want a connection with that paper.[43]

Youngman suggested that the characteristics many readers and journalists associate with traditional women's pages have little to do with WomaNews of the 1990s:

> I think that the connotation of women's page is not one that I would want to attach to WomaNews. That still speaks to me of society cotillions and stories about hot flashes . . . [P]eople are having life-changing things happen to them that are going to affect the course of society. They're going to affect women and men both, but certainly women are, seem to be more sensitive to those kinds of epiphanies — let's tell people about them.[44]

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[43] Barbara Brotman, in a personal interview with the author, 29 August 1994.

[44] Youngman, in a personal interview with the author, 30 August 1994.

The section may not be the newspaper industry's solution to drawing new women readers into the paper, he said, but it may be a factor in retaining current *Tribune* readers.

> I'm not sure that there's any one thing that we could put in or take out of the paper that will attract a lot of new readers. That's not what I get from focus groups. But I think we can make very loyal readers out of people we can.[45]

Women's Ambivalence: Readers of WomaNews

Women readers of WomaNews, despite their differences, found common ground when discussing the women's section and its role in their uniformly busy lives. [46]

Reactions of these 18 women mirrored those reported in recent studies of women's sections described earlier in this paper. Both focus groups revealed women disliked the concept of a woman's section but enjoyed the

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[45] Youngman, in a personal interview with the author, 30 August 1994.

[46] Group I was composed of eight women whose ages were 28, 33, 34, 37, 42, 43, 45 and 47; three were homemakers and five worked outside the home — four part time and one full time. Mean number of children was two, three had a high-school diploma, one some college, two a four-year college degree and two a master's degree. Total household income ranged from a low of $30,000-$39,000 to a high of more than $120,000. The women were avid consumers of media, including watching television (the leading category), listening to the radio, watching video tapes, reading books and reading the local paper. Two read the *Tribune* seven days a week; three, five to six days; two, three to four days; and one, one to two days. Six read the weekly WomaNews four times a month; eight read it only once a month; and one person read it twice a month and three times a month, respectively.

Group II was composed of 10 women whose ages were 30, 31, 32, 36, 39, 41, 46, two at 47, and 48; five worked full time outside the home, two worked part time and three did not respond to the question. Mean number of children was 1.7; two had a high-school diploma, three some college, three a four-year college degree, one an associate degree and two a master's degree. Total household income ranged from a low of $40,000-$49,000 to a high of more than $120,000. Like Group I, these women were avid consumers of media, primarily listening to the radio (the leading category) and watching television, followed by reading books and reading the local paper. Six read the *Tribune* seven days a week; one, five to six days; two, three to four days; and one, one to two days. Eight read the weekly WomaNews four times a month; one read it three times a month; and one person read it twice a month, respectively.

Sunday WomaNews section itself, often "time-shifting" — reading it throughout the week.

Content

Themes that emerged in both groups related to preferred content were: (1) **ownership** — identifying and appreciating WomaNews as "my own section," "just for myself," reading that is often enjoyed as a private, leisure-time activity; (2) **relevance** — seeing "real life" — readers' own realities — mirrored in WomaNews and relating to women depicted in the section (unrealistic situations — including "perfect bodies," clothes and lives — infuriate readers); (3) **coping** — appreciating helpful features that provide them with tips to function more effectively; and (4) **viewpoints** — being exposed to a variety of viewpoints, particularly those of staff writer Brotman, but also of guest columnists.

In the area of **tone**, women in both groups were (a) extraordinarily sensitive to condescension and stereotyping; (b) aware of attempts to manipulate and influence them and (c) adamant that they be treated and taken seriously. An unrelated, but *valued* element was the section's personal tone — which created a sense of intimacy between writer and reader.

Much of the news in which they were interested did not appear in other sections of the *Tribune*, the women conceded, which provided *support for a section for women* in both focus groups. While the two groups differed in degree of reporting, women in both sessions, without prompting, were openly skeptical that the content they sought would be found in other sections of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Advertising

Both groups suggested the section's *stereotypical advertising* (varicose veins and liposuction ads in particular) *created mixed messages* when placed next to editorial content intended to affirm women's strengths and positive body image.

Name

However, *opposition to the inclusion of "woman" in WomaNews* was expressed by many women in both groups — *primarily because this gender-specific label would virtually guarantee men would not read it.* (Group II, in which one woman expressed considerable frustration with the ghettoization of women's news in a gender-specific section, voiced their opposition more strongly than did Group I; however, women in both groups used similar words and phrases to explain their objections.)

Women said it was a "shame" men wouldn't read it; that men needed to be exposed to content; and that women's issues were also men's issues. "Why the segregation?" one woman asked.

Further, the label of "woman" on the section *encouraged men to think about women in stereotypical terms*: "My husband doesn't pick this up much because it's WomaNews," one woman said, echoing comments made by others in the group. "He thinks it's all about PMS and menopause."

Finally, another woman who appreciated WomaNews' coverage of women's issues and interests nevertheless wondered aloud if women really needed a section *that announced itself off-limits to men*:

> I'd agree with the man that said, 'Where's the man's news?' If I really think about what he's saying, I don't know that we need a WomaNews. We need to see these articles, but . . . men need to see these articles, too.[47]

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[47] Focus group participant, Group II, Oakbrook, 29 August 1994.

DISCUSSION

This study of the *Chicago Tribune*'s WomaNews attempted to assess the utility of a woman's section in attracting or keeping women readers and its inherent value to the mainstream press.

Analysis of data gathered in in-depth interviews of four key WomaNews staff members and in two focus groups of women readers suggests that women's sections play an important role in increasing the visibility of women in the mainstream newspaper, giving once-marginal readers a voice and creating for women a sense of connection and identification with others — a community not only of women but of people. WomaNews staff members and readers said the section was making a significant contribution to the advancement and awareness of issues of import to women — and men.

However, for women — who value connection and community — the *woman* in WomaNews explicitly excludes men. For women — many of whom are struggling to cope with increased demands of career and family and seek true partnerships with men — the *woman* in WomaNews threatens to erode their progress.

The unwanted consequences of naming this key section *woman's* news fall into three major categories, each with the potential to alienate the very readers the section hopes to serve and attract:

- women **readers** fear men won't be exposed to issues that are — or should be — the concern of both women *and* men; suspect the section reinforces stereotypes of women; and do not want to be further isolated in a "feminine news ghetto,"

- women **journalists** experience a "disconnect" from their peers; feel their work is trivialized through association with this woman's news ghetto; and

- **advertisers** drawn to a woman's section include those whose goods and services have primarily stereotypical connotations; this, in turn, creates a mixed message by underscoring women's weaknesses instead of their strengths, and can undermine the powerful contribution and appeal of the section.

In addition, while subject- and geographic-zone-specific sections are common newspaper components, a gender-specific section in a mass-circulation daily newspaper may be an inherently dissonant pheomenon. Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory holds that two elements of cognitive information " . . . are in dissonant relation if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other."[48] Many women journalists and readers in this study voiced opposition — in some cases, strong — to the concept of a women's section, yet, they reported regularly reading and enjoying WomaNews. Similarly, several women readers expressed concern that the inclusion of that section in their newspaper could offend men or preclude their exposure to its content — yet, they believed it played an important role at the *Chicago Tribune*, saying they doubted this content would appear at all, were it not for the existence of WomaNews. Women who value connections between and among people and tend to view the world through the filter of relationships may become uncomfortable when the newspaper — constructed to appeal to the entire family for Sunday reading — includes a section that is clearly off limits to men.

Finally, the disconnect between approving of the women's section's content but opposing its gender-specific name may reflect cognitive dissonance of a more profound nature. Today there exists considerable ambivalence among women toward feminism — to which the demise of early women's sections has been attributed. Although a majority of women report that they support feminist ideals (e.g., economic and political parity), a majority do not identify themselves as feminists.[49] For many women, the *label* — not its substance — has a strongly negative connotation:

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[48] Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, Ill. :Row, Peterson, 1957), 13.

> . . . [U]nease with the term 'feminism' has been a persistent concern in the feminist movement . . . . It is, in fact, a complicated historical phenomenon that reflects feminism's successes as well as its failures.[50]

Perhaps readers experience mixed feelings about women's sections because they associate the "women's section" with the politically and emotionally charged women's movement and feminism; they may feel conflicted because of the separatism implied by gender-specific names. Further study could clarify the nature of the dissonance suggested by the reactions of women in this study and suggest ways in which it might be alleviated.

Finally, in the 1990s, when the roles of men and women increasingly overlap and gender segregation evokes images of the 1950s, a "women's" section may be perceived as an anachronism. What's in a name? A message. Newspapers would be well-advised to articulate the message that women will have a voice and presence throughout their pages. Yet, this study also suggests that a section in which the world is filtered through the lens of women has considerable potential for strengthening the connection between the woman reader and her newspaper.

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[49] Wendy Kaminer, "Feminism's Identity Crisis," *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 1993), 52-53.
[50] Wendy Kaminer, see note 49 above, 56.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A — Media use questionnaire
- Appendix B — Description of **WomaNews** content
  March 13, 1994

The University of Georgia Study of Women Readers
Chicago Tribune

Please take five to 10 minutes to fill out this short questionnaire before we start the focus group. This information will be helpful to us when we study all the responses. While we ask that you identify yourself here, remember that all your responses are confidential and you will not be identified by name in any report.

Your name ____

1. **Please estimate for us how much time, in minutes, you spend during an average day with the following media (if you never use it, please write zero in the blank):**

____________watching (or listening to) television
____________listening to the radio (news or music, etc.)
____________reading a national newspaper (like *USA Today, Wall Street Journal, New York Times*)
____________reading a local daily newspaper (for Chicago, or a suburb)
____________reading a magazine
____________watching a taped or rented videocassette in the VCR
____________reading a book
____________using an online service (like America Online, CompuServe, Prodigy, etc.)

2. **How often do you read the *Chicago Tribune* during an average week? Please check one:**

______ 7 days a week
______ 5-6 days a week
______ 3-4 days a week
______ 1-2 days a week

3. **Please list all magazines you read regularly (please include work-related publications).**

____

____

____

4. Let's turn to newspapers. Which content do you look at regularly -- say, almost every time you pick up the paper? Please check all that apply to you.

______Advertising (ads for stores, products and services, etc.)
______Advice columnists (Dear Abby, Ann Landers, etc.)
______Automotive stories
______Business (including news, stock listings, etc.)
______Classified advertising (employment, items for sale, etc.)
______Comics
______Editorial page (letters to editor, cartoon, columnists, editorials)
______Entertainment (movies, TV, listings, reviews, etc.)

______Fashion stories (clothing, styles, etc.)
______Feature stories (about people, lifestyles, health, etc.)
______Food (recipes, stories)
______Garden and home stories
______Horoscopes

News ("front section" stories)
______Local news stories
______State news stories
______U.S. news stories
______International news stories

______Obituaries
______Sports
______Other (please tell us what you look at regularly):

____

5. How often do you read the WomaNews section of the *Chicago Tribune* during an average month? Please check one:

______ 4 times (every week)
______ 3 times a month
______twice a month
______ once a month

Now we'd like to ask you to tell us about yourself. Again, all information will be confidential.

1. **Marital status** ______single (includes divorced) ______married

2. **Number of children living in your household**, if any__________

3. **Education** (please check your highest level)

______ some high school
______ H.S. diploma
______ some college
______ college degree (BA, BS, etc.)
______ some vocational training
______ associate degree
______ professional degree (law, MD, RN, LPN, etc.)
______ some graduate work
______ master's degree
______ doctoral degree
______ post-doctoral work

If you work outside the home, please answer questions 4 and 5. If not, please skip to question 6.

4. **Employment** outside the home is ______part time ______full time

5. **Occupation** (please briefly describe, if your job title doesn't indicate what your duties might be):

____

6. **Age** ____________ (If you do not feel comfortable giving your exact age, please write an age *bracket*.)

7. **Total household income per year** (all members, before taxes) Please check the most appropriate bracket.

______ under $5,000
______ $5,000 - $9,999
______ $10,000 - $14,999
______ $15,000 - $19,999
______ $20,000 - $24,999
______ $25,000 - $29,999
______ $30,000 - $39,000
______ $40,000 - $49,999
______$50,000 - $59,999
______$60,000 - $69,999
______$70,000 - $79,999
______$80,000 - $89,999
______$90,000 - $99,000
______$100,000 - $120,000
______more than $120,000

Thank you so much for providing this information. Please give your questionnaire to one of the researchers, and as soon as everyone is finished, we'll start the focus group!

Appendix B

Description of WomaNews Content

Example Issue: March 13, 1994

The colorful WomaNews section, carried in the *Chicago Tribune* each Sunday (and syndicated in about 60 papers at the time of the study), runs regular features ("Smart Talk," "You at Your Best," "Survival Guide," "Other Voices," "Food for Thought" and others) in addition to its front-page column by Barbara Brotman and a front-page feature story.

Content is balanced and reflects the diverse lifestyles, interests and pursuits of women. A typical issue — published five months prior to the site visit — included the following content in its 12 pages:

- Front-page Barbara Brotman column. A humorous look at the euphemisms — "Preschool Speak" — used by preschool administrators. Brotman refers to *parents*, not mothers, throughout the column.
- Front-page feature. Coverage of "Success: The Show for Women," a show in Chicago that disappointed the audience and the show's organizers. Also by Barbara Brotman.
- Front-page column. "Idea that only men can be inventors is patently ridiculous," by a *Tribune* staff writer, reports about women inventors and the Women Inventors Project. The pull quote on the jump page is, "We've come a long way, but there is still systemic discrimination against women."
- Full-page feature, p. 3. "Blueprint for life— Deborah Doyle has designs on building a better Chicago," a "Turning Point" feature that shows how a Chicago architect found a new focus and success in her life after the death of a sibling.
- Business coverage. Story about a mutual-fund company that buys stock in companies that have "good records on women's issues."
- Double-truck regular feature spread, "You at Your Best." Briefs include a fashion story on raincoats, a column about relationships, a collection of no-pain exercises (with diagrams) and the regular "Miss Manners" column on etiquette.
- "High Profile" column. A feature story about three women who are new to Hollywood and are impressing the critics.
- "Other Voices" columns: one woman's historical look at ice skates; another's strongly worded view that breastfeeding an infant is a private issue between mother and child — not a practice that invites public comment.
- "Working Smart," a column that tells supervisors how to motivate workers through praise.
- "Survival Guide." The regular feature this week gave "smart shopping secrets," including how to find the best bargains at outlet stores.
- Her Say," a regular column. Harriett Woods, president of the National Women's Political Caucus, discusses the increased level of political activity on the part of women in the Midwest.

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Assessment of Lead Writing Practices in U.S. Newspapers

by

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ABSTRACT

Do U.S. newspaper writers still adhere to the principle of writing short, active-voice leads? An assessment of leads in a large sample of staff-written articles found that the average lead is indeed short: about 24 words, and that newspaper leads are close to that average regardless of publication frequency, circulation size or whether the story is written on deadline. However, newspapers do deviate from the principle of using active-voice leads.

Presented at the Newspaper Division faculty paper poster session at the AEJMC Chicago convention, Friday, Aug. 1, 1997.

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Do U.S. newspaper writers still adhere to the principle of writing short, active-voice leads? An assessment of leads in a large sample of staff-written articles found that the average lead is indeed short: about 24 words, and that newspaper leads are close to that average regardless of publication frequency, circulation size or whether the story is written on deadline. However, newspapers do deviate from the principle of using active-voice leads.

Journalism educators teach the same basic news writing principles the field has embraced for more than two generations. Current textbooks emphasize simple or summary leads that are written concisely and in active voice. Assuming these principles are still valid, do the nation's newspaper writers employ short leads written in active voice?

A cursory look at the front page of a single day's issue of some prestige U.S. newspapers revealed long leads in local bylined stories.[1] A 43-word lead in the Chicago *Tribune* was:

> James Heiple, the Illinois Supreme Court's chief justice, apparently knew that he was the target of a disciplinary investigation when he tapped his friend to head the commission that hears such matters, a state agency has alleged in a document challenging the selection.

The longest lead of these papers was 59 words (in a two-sentence lead). But the six front pages had 21 local bylined stories, with a average 38.8-word lead length. Three of the stories had passive voice leads.

Only *USA Today*, the seventh paper scanned, consistently used short leads with active voice. Its five bylined staffer stories averaged 23 words, all in active voice, and representative was this lead:

> Flooding aggravated by heavy rain Monday added to the destruction caused by powerful weekend storms that pummeled the South and Ohio River Valley.

USA Today's lead writing practices should not be surprising. The paper is tightly written and edited in the traditional punchy news writing style. What may be surprising is that many of the nation's other leading newspapers deviate from traditional lead writing principles. These observations prompted an inquiry into the state of lead writing as practiced in U.S. newspapers today.

Literature Review

Little of what is known about lead writing comes from research studies, with a few exceptions. The classics from Swanson and Schramm come from the late 1940s and conclude that leads can either entice a reader to continue reading the story or they can impede further reading.[2]

Wolf and Thomason surveyed writing coaches and found that lead writing was the fifth most frequently mentioned skill that needed improvement on a list of 11 competencies.[3] Preceding leads were: organization, clarity, conciseness and news judgment.

Laakaniemi analyzed the content of in-house newspaper newsletters and determined that long leads was the seventh most frequently discussed writing problem.[4] The author also listed passive voice as the fifth most frequently discussed mechanical or grammar problem.

However, most advice about leads comes from news writing textbooks. These offer a few key points about lead length and use of voice.

Lead length is usually treated as part of concise writing. Mencher provides a wire service reporter's table for general sentence length in which a "fairly difficult to read" sentence begins at 21 words, and "difficult" begins at 25.[5] Fedler opts for lines rather than words, advising that leads should be no more than two or three typed lines.[6]

But many authors do suggest a word maximum. Itule and Anderson say of lead length: "A summary lead should contain no more than 35 words...the longer the lead, the greater the risk that it will be difficult to read or understand."[7] Stone writes: "Beginners should learn to keep their first-paragraph lead well within the 30-word maximum. After years in the business, too often writers forget the excellent reasons for that rule...to avoid cluttering the lead."[8]

Rich simply says: "Write short sentences — fewer than 25 words on average...Write simple sentences. Keep the subject and verb close together."[9] The Missouri Group agrees by including in a lead writing checklist: "Keep the lead short, usually fewer than 25 words, unless you use two sentences."[10] And Hutchison concurs: "The initial sentence of the lead is usually less than 25 words."[11]

The text writers agree about short leads, and the trend in terms of the most recent book editions, is for progressively shorter lead sentences.

Little quantitative research exists on lead length, although a study by Stapler suggested that a one-sentence summary-type lead interferes with readership because the lead is likely to be one of the longest sentences in the news story.[12] Catalano's replication and much broader study of wire service leads also concluded that they were cumbersome.[13]

Gillman compared the *News of Boca Raton* with 10 Michigan dailies in the under-50,000 circulation category.[14] He found that the *News'* hard leads fell in a middle length range of the 11 papers at 21 words, and that all of these papers' leads averaged fewer words than those reported in studies of the larger dailies.

Active vs. passive. The commentary about active and passive voice is less decisive than for writing short leads. Although nearly every news writing text warns against passive leads, verb voice is a grammar matter. Authors certainly agree that active is better than passive, but most acknowledge that passive voice does have its place.

The Missouri Group gives four reasons to avoid using passive voice: it's wordy, makes the verb sound past when the present is intended, hides who is responsible for the action being depicted, and is not dynamic.[15] The authors still conclude that there are times passive voice should be used.

Kessler and McDonald devote a chapter to passive voice, reiterating the reasons to avoid using it.[16] They conclude: "Active voice creates sharp, clear and vigorous sentence construction. It saves words and helps the verb maintain its power. Use it unless you have a justifiable reason to use passive voice." Brooks and Pinson agree: "Good writers rewrite passive-voice sentences in active voice unless they have a specific reason to do so...."[17]

Rich says that active voice is preferred over passive, "But you may need to use passive voice when the emphasis is on what happened instead of who caused it to happen."[18]

Hough advises students, "If you study the front page of almost any newspaper, you will find that probably four out of five news stories begin with sentences that consist of a subject + verb + direct object."[19] But Hough is perhaps the most forgiving on active vs. passive voice, advising against flat and dull sentences that lack proper news value focus. He writes: "Don't overuse the passive voice. But don't avoid it."

Like Hough, Fink and Fink concede that active is superior to passive voice but advocate using the most effective writing style.[20] They add that "with few exceptions, your basic rule in writing should be simple: Avoid restrictive 'rules' and use language forms that communicate effectively and avoid those that don't."

Baker reluctantly admits that "the passive voice has certain uses," and notes several.[21] However, Baker is a confirmed critic: "The passive voice is more wordy and deadly than most people imagine, or it would not be so persistent." In a section headed "Shun the Passive Voice," Baker writes: "The passive voice liquidates and buries the active individual, along with most of the awful truth;" "committees write this way;" and "Its dullness derives as much from its extra wordage as from its personality."

While most are not so elegant and vitriolic as Baker, these grammar writers concede that passive voice has its place in certain contexts, but all would probably agree that a news story's lead is not likely to be one of those contexts.

Breaking vs. deadline news. The only study that reported on readability of different kinds of news content was done by Danielson and Bryan in the mid-1960s.[22] Contrasting hard and soft news, they found better readability in soft news and wrote that the "correlation between hard news and hard writing is inevitable;" more difficult concepts require more complex writing.

Hypotheses

Several hypotheses guided the investigation based on the literature review and the perusal of leads in several prestige newspapers:

H1 Today's newspapers deviate from the principle of short leads.

H2 Today's newspapers deviate from the principle of active voice leads.

H3 Deviations in lead length and voice are greater for breaking news than for non-breaking (based on the Danielson and Bryan study).

H4 Deviations in lead length and voice are greater for larger papers than for smaller papers (based on the perusal of a single day's prestige papers, the Stapler and Catalano studies of large dailies, and the Gillman study of smaller dailies).

H5 Prestige dailies have longer leads than non-prestige dailies (based on the perusal of a single day's prestige papers).

H6 Papers that deviate in lead length for breaking stories also deviate in non-breaking stories (an extension of H1 and H3).

Leads longer than 30 words were considered "deviations" in lead length. Deviation in voice was defined arbitrarily as one-fourth or more instances of passive voice in the number of leads analyzed. One-fourth deviations is considered great enough frequency to suggest that writers do not strive for, nor do their editors demand active-voice leads.

Methodology

Sample. The study is a content analysis of a sample of U.S. newspapers received as part of another research project.[23] *Editor & Publisher Yearbook 1996* was the data base, with a design that drew equal random samples from daily and larger weekly newspaper categories stored in the *E&P* data file and stratified by circulation levels.

A mail survey was conducted during September 1996, with a second mailing in October 1996. Publishers and managers were asked to send a copy of their most recent issue upon receipt of the mailing. Unfortunately, even with a second mailing, the return rate was low. The mailing was sent to 402 newspapers, but fewer than 100 editions were returned. The sample was augmented for smaller weeklies by using editions available in a university journalism reading room. The sample was further augmented by contacting prestige papers in the summer of 1997 and asking for the most recent issue.[24]

Because the sample is not a random sample of the nation's newspapers, results are not generalizable. Still, the project includes representation from all categories of dailies and weeklies, and analyzes more than 1,000 stories.

Unit of Analysis. Each local bylined story appearing in the first section of newspapers, and in the second section of newspapers where that section was headed "local" or "metro" news, was analyzed. Coders were instructed to: "Begin at the top of the page and move left-to-right on the page. Qualifying stories must have a byline; code only local stories by local reporters."

Additionally, coders were instructed to omit: stories with a dateline or wire service, news service or syndicate logo; local columnists; and "roundup" stories such as "Police Blotter" or "Court Reports." The intent was to restrict the unit of analysis to hard news or feature stories written by staff writers.

Categories: The study used three categories. The first was counting words in the first paragraph of a bylined story. Rules for counting words were: a person's middle initial counts as a word, "but R.L. (as in R.L. Smith) is one word; hyphenated words (late-morning, air-conditioned) count as two words, but shorter hyphenated words (co-worker, ex-mayor) count as only one."

A coding system was used with categories for each succeeding seven-word block, e.g., a 24-word lead was coded "3;" a 31-word lead was coded "4." While counting words may seem a rote task, if the number of words is close to one of the category demarcations (a 21-word lead), a coder might miscount by a word and place this lead in category "3" rather than "2." Holsti intercoder reliability for this category was 87%. Originally this category was divided into nine-word blocks, but the pilot test indicated few leads ran to more than 60 words, and a seven-word category added precision while maintaining reliability.

The second category was distinguishing between active and passive voice. Definitions were: "Active voice is 'Smith died,' 'Jones escaped,' 'bill will become law,' 'The Council elected,' 'motorists should avoid' — in past tense or in future tense, 'Snow is predicted'; passive voice is 'Smith was killed,' 'Jones has escaped,' 'the bill has been passed,' 'Jones was elected,' 'motorists were warned.'"

Journalism educators who teach beginning news writing principles know how difficult it is to explain active vs. passive voice. Coders were seniors in a journalism research methods class, but almost all were advertising majors. The distinction between active and passive voice was discussed in class, and the category was part of the pilot test. Holsti intercoder reliability was 77.4% for this category.

The final category was breaking news vs. non-breaking. Definitions were: "Breaking is news that happened very recently, often on deadline — Did the reporter write the story that day or that night? (fires, elections, robberies, awards, council meetings, etc.). Features are stories developed over longer periods of time. (growing orchids, teen pregnancy trends, personality profiles, why tax increase is needed, plans to improve schools, air pollution levels, etc.)"

While coding hard news vs. features may be considered relatively easy,[25] student coders had more difficulty with this category than with the other two. Because the objective was to distinguish deadline stories from those with more writing time, and thus more time to sharpen a lead, the "breaking" or "deadline" vs. "features" distinction was used after the pilot study showed coders could not distinguish between spot or hard news and features. Even after putting the emphasis on the amount of time the writer may have had to write and sharpen the lead, this category had a Holsti intercoder reliability of only 75%.

Coding. Those who discuss content analysis procedures,[26] recommend a series of tactics to improve reliability. This study employed those strategies by including a pilot test, a discussion of problems following the pilot test, and reconstruction of categories and clarification of their definitions.

Procedures. This study used additional controls by limiting the number of papers coded to no more than five papers per coder to avoid maturation, or loss of concentration due to tiring, during a supervised hour-and-a-half class period. All students were required to code one of four pre-selected newspapers, each of which had about eight qualifying stories, that were used for the intercoder reliability test. However, the students were not told which of the papers they coded was the test paper.

Of the 23 students who performed the coding, nine failed to reach 80% intercoder reliability on the first attempt. These students were given a second opportunity to qualify on another of the four test papers, and all but three qualified. The study data are based only on stories coded by those students who reached 80% agreement. The average Holsti intercoder reliability score for all coders who qualified to provide data for the study was 87.8%, considered well within the validity guidelines for a content analysis study.

A paid graduate assistant matched the sample of papers with *Editor & Publisher Yearbook 1996* to verify daily vs. weekly or bi-weekly publication, the weekday of each coded edition, and the paper's circulation.

Results

A total of 126 papers was used for the content analysis. Before testing the hypotheses, it is worthwhile to describe the papers and the leads included in the study using each coded paper as a unit of analysis as seen in Table 1.

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table 1 about here

The sample had about twice as many dailies as non-dailies, a likely result of the larger papers having more staff personnel to process the survey request and the inclusion of prestige papers. Days of the week are weighted to the mid-week, probably as a result of most non-dailies being published on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The circulations represented are relatively flat, indicating the sample stratification by circulation size and the supplementary convenience sample of weeklies. However, the addition of prestige papers made over-200,000 the mode category. The median circulation of all 126 papers was 33,877, with dailies averaging just over 42,000, non-dailies averaging about 7,000, and prestige papers averaging 320,000. In all, while the sample is not generalizable, it does include a range of known categories in the newspaper industry.

The sample of stories analyzed was large. A total of 1,140 qualifying stories, a mean of 8.7 stories per paper, was coded with three-quarters of them representing daily newspapers. The average words in the first paragraph for all papers was 23.5 words, slightly less for dailies, more for non-dailies, and most for the set of prestige dailies.

A mean 23.5-word lead length is well within the traditional expectation of a simple summary lead and is sufficient evidence to reject the first hypothesis, that today's newspapers deviate from the principle of short leads.

However, of the total leads coded, 789 or 70% were active leaving 30%, or nearly one-third, passive. The percentage of active-voice leads in dailies was 71%; it was 63% in non-dailies, and 77% in prestige papers. Finding this deviation in voice, the second hypothesis was supported: Today's newspapers deviate from the principle of active-voice leads.

Of the coded stories, 438 or 43% were breaking or deadline stories, with dailies having 48%, non-dailies having 32%, and prestige dailies having 41%. Still, the number of words in both breaking and non-breaking story leads hugged the mean at about 23.5 words.

Statistical tests were performed for the remaining hypotheses, as seen in Table 2.

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table 2 about here

Hypothesis 3 tested the Danielson and Bryan finding that deviations will be greater for breaking news than for non-breaking or "features." No difference was found in the word length of leads for these two categories. Also, no difference was found in voice with about 70% of both breaking and non-breaking stories written in active voice. Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

Hypothesis 4 expected greater deviations to exist in larger-circulation papers. Splitting groups near the median level, the tests showed no differences in number of lead words by circulation size in the dailies or the non-dailies, although both of the larger-circulation groups did have longer average leads.

While there were subtle differences in voice for both groups studied, with the smaller papers having a lower percentage of active voice leads, only the daily group produced a statistically significant outcome. Hypothesis 4 is rejected for lead length, but the data do suggest that larger papers tend to have longer leads. Hypothesis 4 is supported for voice deviations in that both groups had at least one-fourth passive-voice leads.

Hypothesis 5 followed the observation that prestige dailies seemed to have long leads. The data show a statistically significant difference in the length of leads, with prestige papers having longer leads. Hypothesis 5 was supported.

The final hypothesis was an extension of H1 and H3 that predicted today's newspapers deviate from the traditional lead-writing principles. The assumption tested was whether a paper with longer leads in breaking stories would also have longer leads in non-breaking stories: Would the paper's writers tend toward similarly long or similarly short leads in both types of stories? The hypothesis was tested with Pearson correlation and supported: Lead length formed a trend for the newspaper as a whole.

Conclusion and Speculation

Based on this analysis, the state of lead writing in today's newspapers seems to follow the traditional principle of short leads. All groups of papers in the study averaged leads well under 30 words. However, less attention is being paid to writing active leads, with about 30% of story leads being passive. Editors might consider more emphasis or training to meet the active lead-writing principle.

Deadline writing pressure seems to have little effect on lead length, if judged by the distinction between breaking and non-breaking stories. The suggestion from earlier research studies that "hard" news requires more complex or longer leads was not supported by this study.

The study does hint at a consistent (though not statistically significant) difference in lead length by newspaper type. Those at non-prestige dailies write the shortest leads (22.3 words). Their breaking news leads are 22.7 words, and their non-breaking news leads are 20.7, the shortest average leads found.

Those at non-daily papers write slightly longer leads (24.6 words), and their breaking news leads at 25.2 words is only a little longer than their non-breaking leads at 24.1 words.

However, the prestige paper writers do average longer leads at 26.6, with breaking leads averaging 25.5 words and non-breaking leads averaging 27.6, the longest average lead in the study.

Because all of these lead averages fall within the traditional short-lead range, speculation might suggest that editors at most dailies ride herd on their writers to keep leads short. Editors at non-daily (smaller) papers do a better job than might be expected of keeping writers' leads short. And the editors of prestige papers might believe that their more sophisticated readers can tolerate longer leads without being confused.

It is also possible that prestige paper editors afford their writers more leeway, or that the prestige papers are initiating a trend toward more words in a lead paragraph composed of several short sentences, as Stapler suggested.[27] If this is the case, much of the newspaper industry might be expected to follow suit by copying the leading papers.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the industry is following the lead of *USA Today* instead. That would explain the predominance of traditional, short-lead writing documented in this study.

Table 1: Sample descriptive data and hypotheses tests

	Number of Papers	Percent
Publication frequency:		
Daily	75	60%
Weekly	24	19
Bi-weekly	8	6
Prestige	19	15

	Number of Papers	Percent
Publication day:		
Monday	18	14%
Tuesday	16	13
Wednesday	29	23
Thursday	23	18
Friday	21	17
Saturday	8	6
Sunday	11	9

	Number of Papers	Percent
Circulation category:		
under 3,000	6	5%
3,000-9,999	20	16
10,000-19,999	17	13.5
20,000-29,999	17	13.5
30,000-49,999	14	11
50,000-99,999	13	10
100,000-200,000	15	12
over 200,000	24	19

* * *

	All Papers		*Dailies*		*Non-Dailies*		*Prestige*	
	Number	Mean or %	Number	Mean or %	Number	Mean or %	Number	Mean or %
Median Circulation	126	33,877	75	42,175	32	6,948	19	319,990
Qualifying Stories	1,140	8.7	621	55%	284	25%	235	21%
$\bar{X}$ Lead Words		23.5		22.3		24.6		26.6
Active Voice	789	70%	435	71%	174	63%	180	77%
Breaking Stories	438	43%	295	48%	91	32%	97	41%
$\bar{X}$ Words in Breaking Leads		23.7		22.7		25.2		25.5
$\bar{X}$ Words in Non-Breaking Leads	648	23.2	319	20.7	191	24.1	138	27.6

Table 2: Remaining hypotheses tests of means, Chi-square, correlation

	Mean Lead Length		Active Voice	
Breaking Stories (n=483)	24.4	t=1.46;p=.15	70%	χ^2=.14;p=n.s.
Non-Breaking Stories (n=648)	23.6		69%	

	Mean Lead Length		Active Voice	
Dailies:				
Under 40,000 (n=36)	20.2	t=1.92;p=.06	66%	χ^2=3.94;p <.05
40,000-plus (n=39)	24.0		74%	
Non-Dailies:				
Under 7,000 (n=16)	23.7	t=.50;p=n.s.	58%	χ^2=3.64;p=.06
7,000-plus (n=16)	25.0		69%	
Non-prestige dailies (n=75)	22.3	t=2.21;p <.01	71%	χ^2=3.15;p=.08
Prestige dailies: (n=19)	26.6		77%	

Pearson Correlation:	Lead Length in Non-Breaking Stories (n=122)	
	r^2	p
Lead Length in Breaking Stories (n=103)	.261	<.01

Notes

1. This topic emerged during a discussion of active and passive voice in a 1995 beginning news writing class. A perusal of U.S. prestige newspapers revealed little adherence to traditional lead principles. The examples described are from available Tuesday editions published in spring 1997, after this study began, to emphasize that similar examples can be found on any given day. The prestige papers were: *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*.

2. Charles Swanson (1948). "Readability and readership: A controlled experiment." *Journalism Quarterly*, (March), 339-345. Wilbur Schramm (1947). "Measuring another dimension of newspaper readership," *Journalism Quarterly*, (December), 295.

3. Rita Wolf and Tommy Thomason (1986). "Writing coaches: Their strategies for improving writing," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 7, (Spring), 43-49.

4. Ray Laakaniemi (1987). "Letter from the coach," *Newspaper Research Journal, 8*, 3: 53-58.

5. Melvin Mencher (1993). *Basic media writing, 4th ed.* Madison, WI: WCB Brown & Benchmark, p. 136.

6. Fred Fedler (1993). *Reporting for the print media, 5th ed.* Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

7. Bruce D. Itule and Douglas A. Anderson (1991). *News writing and reporting for today's media, 2nd ed.* New York: McGraw-Hill, p. 93.

8. Gerald Stone (1992). *Newswriting*. New York: HarperCollins, p. 24.

9. Carole Rich (1994). *Writing and reporting news: A coaching method*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 150.

10. The Missouri Group: Brian S. Brooks, George Kennedy, Daryl R. Moen and Don Ranly (1996). *News reporting and writing, 5th ed.* New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 55.

11. Earl R. Hutchison Sr. (1996). *Writing for mass communication, 2nd ed.* New York: Longman, p. 27.

12. Harry Stapler (1985). "The one-sentence/long-sentence habit of writing leads and how it hurts readership," *Newspaper Research Journal, 7*, (Winter), 17-27.

13. Kevin Catalano (1990). "On the wire: How six news services are exceeding readability standards," *Journalism Quarterly, 61*, 1: 97-103.

14. Timothy Gillman (1994). "The problem of long leads in news and sports stories," *Newspaper Research Journal, 15*, 4: 29-39.

15. The Missouri Group: George Kennedy, Daryl R. Moen and Don Ranly (1993). *Beyond the inverted pyramid: Effective writing for newspapers, magazines and specialized publications*. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 228-230.

16. Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald (1992). *When words collide: A media writer's guide to grammar and style, 3rd ed.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 81-89.

17. Brian S. Brooks and James L. Pinson (1993). *Working with words: A concise handbook for media writers and editors*. New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 37.

18. Carole Rich (1994), op. cit., pp. 164-165.

19. George A. Hough 3rd (1995). *News writing, 5th ed*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., pp. 394, 398.

20. Conrad C. Fink and Donald E. Fink (1994). *Introduction to magazine writing*. New York: Macmillan.

21. Sheridan Baker (1991). *The practical stylist: Third Canadian edition*. New York: HarperCollins, pp. 123-125.

22. Wayne A. Danielson and Sam Dunn Bryan (1964). "Readability of wire stories in eight news categories," *Journalism Quarterly, 41*, 105-106.

23. Wanda M. Brandon (1997). *Journalism learning experiences and newspaper job success*. Unpublished dissertation, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale School of Journalism.

24. "Prestige" dailies in the study were: *The Christian Science Monitor, Louisville Courier Journal, Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Post, Charlotte Observer, Sacramento Bee, Detroit News, Chicago Tribune, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Miami Herald, Nashville Tennessean, St. Petersburg Times, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Denver Post, Baltimore Sun, Kansas City Star*. Others that qualified for the prestige designation arrived too late to be included in the study. Although critics might argue about including several of these papers, the study's purpose in designating these is their recognition of credibility and general excellence. A case might be made that only half a dozen U.S. newspapers qualify as "prestige" papers, but the study's hypothesis required a group large enough to warrant statistical testing.

25. Michael Singletary (1994). *Mass communication research: Contemporary methods and applications*. New York: Longman, p. 295.

26. Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick (1994). *Mass media research: An introduction, 4th ed*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

27. Harry Stapler (1985), op. cit.

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New Study Contradicts

Medsger's *Winds of Change*

By Fred Fedler, Tim Counts,

Arlen Carey, and Maria Cristina Santana

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A paper presented to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the organization's convention in Chicago, July 30-Aug. 2, 1997.

New Study Contradicts

Medsger's *Winds of Change*

By Fred Fedler, Tim Counts,

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In 1996, The Freedom Forum published *Winds of Change* by Betty Medsger, whose critical findings attracted immediate attention. Medsger concluded, for example, that:

> The future of journalism education is jeopardized by college and university hiring policies and philosophies of journalism education that have led to a decline in hiring faculty with significant experience and expertise in journalism....Increasingly, the essential requirement for being hired to teach journalism is a doctoral degree, without regard for the quality or length of experience as a journalist. In fact, 17% of journalism educators have never worked as journalists, and an additional 47% have less than 10 years' experience as journalists.[23]

Medsger's findings concern an important issue. But are they accurate? There are at least three reasons to question Medsger's findings. First, other studies have found that faculty members in journalism and mass communication (JMC) have more professional experience. Second, Medsger's response rate was low, only 22%. Third, Medsger and other critics generalize, perhaps unfairly.

Three studies conducted during the 1980s found that JMC's faculty members have, on average, more professional experience than Medsger's respondents:

*A 1982 survey by the American Society of Journalism School Administrators (ASJSA) found that faculty members had a mean of 7.4 years of newspaper experience, with a range of 5.9 for those with a doctorate to 8.5 for those without a doctorate.[2]

*Also in 1982, Fedler and Counts surveyed 200 assistant professors, 200 associate professors, and 200 professors, and found that the average respondent had 12.5 years of professional experience.[3]

*In 1988, Weaver and Wilhoit found that only 13 of the 893 faculty members they surveyed (1.5%) had no media experience. The range in years of experience was from 1 to 50, with a median of 7 and mean of 9.3. "For those holding the Ph.D.," Weaver and Wilhoit said, "the mean number of years of media experience was 6.5, compared to 12 for those without the Ph.D., offering no support for the often-heard charge that Ph.D.s in our field have little or no media experience."[4]

All three studies had response rates at least double Medsger's. The ASJSA study had a response rate of 49%. Fedler and Counts had a response rate of 52.6%, and Weaver and Wilhoit had a response rate of 79%. Still, Medsger may be right. Hiring policies and faculty members may have changed since the 1980s.

Another factor complicates the issue. The faculty members who teach news writing and editing may need -- and have -- more professional experience than the faculty members who teach JMC law, for example. The faculty members who teach law may benefit more from three years in a law school than from 10 in a newsroom.[5] Similarly, faculty members in some of JMC's other specialties may also benefit more from other types of training and experience than from a uniform 10 years in a newsroom.

Furthermore, departments are changing, with only 11.8% of JMC's students now enrolled in traditional news/editorial (news writing and editing) sequences.[6] To accommodate students' new interests, faculty members' backgrounds may be changing.

Few researchers, however, have separated and compared the faculty members in JMC's different specialties. An exception, the ASJSA study, found that fewer than 40% of the faculty members with doctorates listed "skills" courses (reporting, editing, and photography, for example) as their primary teaching areas. More than 60% listed non-skills or concept areas such as law, history, and theory.[7]

Still, critics generalize, insisting that every faculty member needs significant professional experience, often 10 years or more. Critics add that many of today's faculty members have little or no experience:

> *In 1982, MacDougall complained that in some places it is easier for a "Ph.D. communicologist" with no experience to get a job than it is for an experienced journalism professional.[8]
>
> *In 1990, Bagdikian said: "Another endemic journalism education problem is irrationality in faculty appointments. The demand that a senior appointment for teaching journalism be a Ph.D. is silly, but common. Professional journalism should be taught by men and women who themselves have spent 10 or more years doing high-quality journalism, regardless of advanced degree. A 28-year-old holder of a doctorate may be a scholar in communications studies but will know little or nothing about the practice of good journalism."[9]
>
> *In 1990, Weinberg complained, "Journalism schools today -- sometimes willingly and sometimes under pressure from central administrations -- are becoming increasingly dominated by Ph.D.s, many of them mass communication scholars with no experience in newsrooms."[10]
>
> *In a second article, published in 1991, Weinberg charged that: "...few first-rate journalists hold Ph.D.s or have any desire to earn one once they've joined an institution's faculty. At the same time, many academics with doctorates in journalism have

> little or no experience working in a newsroom, except possibly for summer internships. This makes it difficult for them to teach students the skills they need to function in news operations."[11]
>
> *In 1992, Henley complained that, "Many journalism programs are run and staffed by faculty who themselves have little or no media experience."[12]

Dennis calls those and other criticisms "a dialogue of the deaf" and explains that, "The same issues and problems have been inventoried and debated for years, yielding little agreement and much confusion."[13] Weaver adds, "Often these criticisms are based on sketchy information or, worse yet, on stereotypes built from a few anecdotal cases."[14]

Although not entirely new, Medsger's criticisms are more troubling than most because they are based on systematic study, not stereotypes. The Freedom Forum commissioned Medsger's report, and the Roper Center mailed her questionnaires -- each about 10 pages long -- to 2,000 JMC educators.[15] Some of Medsger's key findings include:

> *The portion of faculty members with doctorates doubled among those who began teaching in the last decade. Eighty-four percent of the faculty members who have taught 10 or fewer years have doctorates, compared to 42% of the faculty members who have taught more than 10 years.[16]
>
> *The percentage of faculty members with more than 10 years of professional experience is declining. Only 38% of the faculty members 44 or younger have more than 10 years experience, compared to 41% of those 45 to 59, and to 67% of those 60 or older.
>
> *Twenty-three percent of the faculty members 44 and younger never worked full-time as journalists, compared to 15% of those 45 to 59, and 13% of those 60 or older. Overall, 17% of JMC's faculty members have no experience as journalists.[17]
>
> *Twenty-one percent of the faculty members with doctorates never worked full-time as journalists, compared to 11% of those without doctorates.[18]

Medsger's study has obvious strengths. It was apparently well funded, enabling Medsger to take a detailed look at JMC educators in the mid 1990s, and to examine trends over time. Because of her work's importance, this study will try to confirm her findings. In addition, this study will separate JMC's faculty members, comparing those in different specialties.

Methodology

In the spring of 1996, the authors mailed questionnaires to a random sample of 598 members of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). The authors' original intent was to learn more about the value of JMC research. After the publication of Medsger's study, the authors re-analyzed their data, making new comparisons to learn more about the characteristics and professional experience of faculty members in AEJMC's various divisions.

To obtain a random sample of approximately 600 members of AEJMC, the authors used the association's 1995-1996 directory and started with the third entry (a number selected at random) in its alphabetical listing of members. The authors then addressed a questionnaire to the person described in every fifth entry, excluding anyone who taught at a community college or outside the United States. If the fifth entry listed someone ineligible for the study, the authors proceeded to the next entry.

To maximize their response rate, the authors limited their questionnaire to 23 items, printed on both sides of a single sheet of paper. The first questions asked for demographic information: the respondents' gender, rank, highest earned degree, years of full-time teaching experience, and years of full-time work in the field. Other questions asked about the respondents' institutions and about the amount of time the respondents devoted to teaching, research, service, and administration.

Three questions asked about the respondents' productivity as researchers: (1) the number of refereed convention papers they had presented during the past five years, (2) the number of refereed journal articles they had published during the past five years, and (3) the total number of textbooks they had written or contributed to. Finally, eight additional questions -- the primary focus of the original study -- asked about the respondents' use of JMC research.

The questionnaire listed JMC's largest specialties, and each respondent was instructed to mark his or her primary areas of specialization, circling "as many areas as appropriate." The initial study found that the number and percentage of respondents involved in each of the specialties included:

103 (36.9%)	Reporting/editing
100 (35.8%)	Mass comm/society
80 (28.7%)	Theory/methodology
63 (22.6%)	Advertising/public relations
49 (17.6%)	History
47 (16.8%)	Radio/television
43 (15.4%)	Law
38 (13.6%)	Ethics
37 (13.3%)	International
36 (12.9%)	Other
21 (7.5%)	Photojournalism/visual com

The 279 respondents marked a total of 617 areas of specialization, an average of 2.21 per respondent. Three of the specialties clearly involve training in professional skills: (1) reporting/editing, (2) advertising/public relations, and (3) radio/television. Six of the others do not: (1) mass comm/society, (2) theory/methodology, (3) history, (4) law, (5) ethics, and (6) international.

To learn more about faculty members in the different specialties -- and, especially, more about their professional experience -- the authors compared the faculty members involved in those nine specialties.

The authors did not include the "Other" category in their analysis. The 36 faculty members who checked that category listed nearly 20 different specialties.[19] The authors also excluded the smallest of the specialties, photojournalism/visual comm. Only 21 respondents marked that specialty, not enough for comparisons which required dividing the respondents in each specialty into as many as six or eight smaller groups (by years of teaching and professional experience, for example).

Results

The authors received 279 usable replies for a response rate of 46.7%. Using those replies, the authors' initial study revealed more about the characteristics of JMC's faculty members:*

*By gender, 65.6% were men

*By rank, 9.3% were instructors, 28.7% assistant professors, 24.7% associate professors, 28.7% professors, and 8.2% "Other."

*By degree, 1.9% had a bachelor's, 25.9% a master's, and 72.2% a doctorate.

*The respondents had taught a median of 10.0 years and a mean of 11.9 years.

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*These and other percentages do not always add up to 100 because some respondents did not answer every question. Other respondent gave more than one response to some questions. Also, for various reasons, some responses were unusable.

*The respondents had worked full-time in their field a median of 10.0 years and a mean of 12.1 years. Only 12 of the 279 respondents -- 4.3% -- said they had never worked full-time in their field. Nine others did not answer the question.

*The respondents devoted a median of 50% to 59% of their time to teaching, 20% to 29% of their time to research and 10% to 19% of their time to service.[20]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE. The key issue for JMC's critics seems to be faculty members' professional experience. Due to the overlap in specializations, tests of significance were impossible for three comparisons. Still, the authors were able to approach the issue from different perspectives, with consistent results.

The authors began by separating the respondents by specialty and comparing the professional experience of the faculty members in JMC's nine largest specialties. The authors found that 61.4% of the faculty members who taught reporting/editing had 11 or more years of professional experience, a figure higher than in any other specialty. Conversely, only 16.8% had 0 to 5 years of professional experience, far below the average of 24.9%. Faculty members with the least professional experience taught in two concept areas: theory/methodology and mass comm/society. (See Table I on the following page)

Second, the authors calculated the mean and median for each specialty, and found that respondents who taught reporting/editing had more professional experience than the respondents in all but one of JMC's other specialties: a mean of 14.5 years and median of 13.0. The mean for JMC's other specialties included: ethics, 14.7 years; history, 13.9; law, 13.4; international, 13.2; advertising/public relations, 13.0; mass comm/society, 11.0; radio/television, 10.4; and theory/methodology, 9.9.

Table I

The Respondents' Years Of Professional Experience

JMC SPECIALTY	0-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	16+ YEARS	DID NOT RESPOND
Reporting/editing	16.8%	19.8%	23.8%	37.6%	2.0%
Advertising/pr	29.5	16.4	18.0	34.4	1.6
Radio/tv	25.6	23.3	23.3	23.3	4.7
Ethics	21.6	16.2	16.2	37.8	8.1
History	14.9	25.5	19.1	36.2	4.3
International	21.6	27.0	13.5	29.7	8.1
Law	29.3	22.0	12.2	36.6	0.0
Mass comm/society	31.3	22.9	15.6	26.0	4.2
Theory/methodology	33.8	26.0	14.3	22.1	3.9
AVERAGE	24.9	22.1	17.3	31.5	

Third, the authors combined the faculty members in JMC's three skills areas (advertising/public relations, reporting/editing, and radio/ television) and compared them to the faculty members involved in the six concept areas. Fifty-three percent of the faculty members in the skills areas had 11 or more years of professional experience, compared to 43.7% of those in the concept areas. Only 22.5% of those in the skills areas had 0 to 5 years of professional experience. (See Table II on the following page)

Not one of the 103 respondents who listed writing/editing as one of their areas of specialization said they had no experience. However, three (2.91%) failed to answer the question, leaving it blank.

Table II

The Respondents' Years Of Professional Experience

JMC SPECIALTY	0-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	16+ YEARS	NO RESPONSE
Skills areas	22.5%	21.4%	20.3%	33.0%	2.7%
Concept areas	29.5	23.2	16.3	27.4	3.7

The authors then divided the respondents into discrete groups, comparing those who marked reporting/editing to all those who did not. Of the 267 respondents, 101 (37.8%) listed reporting/editing, and they had significantly more professional (but not teaching) experience.[21] Sixty-one percent had 11 or more years of professional experience, compared to 38.6% of all the other respondents. Conversely, only 16.8% of the reporting/editing faculty had only 1 to 5 years of professional experience, compared to 33.1% of the other respondents. $X^2 = 14.86$, $p. = < .005$. (See Table III)

Table III

Professional Experience: Reporting/ Editing vs. All Other Respondents

JMC SPECIALTY	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	16-60 YEARS
Reporting/editing	16.8%	19.8%	23.8%	37.6%
All others	33.1	23.5	15.1	23.5

The authors also compared all the faculty members who taught in one or more of the three skills areas to faculty members who taught in only the concept areas. A total of 182 faculty members (68.2%) taught in the skills areas, and they had significantly more media experience. $X^2 = 17.77$, $p. = < .023$. (See Table IV)

Table IV

Professional Experience And Teaching Specialty

JMC SPECIALTY	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	16-60 YEARS	NO RESPONSE
Skills areas	22.6%	23.9%	18.2%	32.1%	3.1%
Concept areas only	36.5%	23.5%	14.1%	20.0%	5.9%

DEGREES AND RESEARCH. With the respondents divided by specialty, the authors also examined two other stereotypes. First, critics charge that a Ph.D. has become more important than professional experience: that every new faculty member needs a Ph.D. If that stereotype is accurate, the percentage of faculty members with Ph.D.s should be consistent in JMC's different specialties. The authors, however, found that the percentage of Ph.D.s varied from specialty to specialty.

Respondents who taught advertising/public relations had the lowest percentage of Ph.D.s: 67.2%, closely followed by another of the skills areas, reporting/editing (69.3%). By comparison, more than 80% of the faculty members in all but one of the six concept areas had Ph.D.s. (See Table V on the following page)

Table V

The Respondents' Highest Earned Degree

JMC SPECIALTY	BACHELOR'S	MASTER'S	DOCTORATE
Advertising/pr	0.0	32.8%	67.2%
Reporting/editing	2.0%	28.7	69.3
History	0.0	24.5	75.5
Radio/television	4.3	19.1	76.6
Ethics	0.0	18.9	81.1
Mass comm/society	0.0	16.2	83.8
Law	0.0	15.4	84.6
Theory/methodology	0.0	11.4	88.6
International	0.0	11.1	88.9

The second stereotype involves research. Critics dislike universities' emphasis on research, and charge that every faculty member is required to conduct research. The evidence, however, suggests otherwise.

The faculty members who taught reporting/editing were among JMC's most experienced and successful. Fifty-eight percent were associate or full professors, and 55.7% had taught 11 or more years. (See Tables XI and XII on Page 20 in the Appendix). Yet they conducted less research than the faculty members in JMC's other specialties.

Three measures confirm that finding. First, 18.4% of the respondents who taught reporting/editing said they conducted no research. The percentages for the eight other specialties were all lower: law, 11.9%; ethics, 10.5%; radio/television, 6.4%; history, 6.3%; international, 5.4%; mass comm/society, 5.1%; theory/ methodology, 3.8%; and advertising/public relations, 3.2%. The average was 5.4%.

Second, respondents who taught reporting/editing devoted less of their time to research. Thirty-five percent devoted no more than 10% of their time to it, and 69% devoted no more than 30% of their time to it. (See Table VI)

Table VI

The Percentage Of Time Respondents Devoted To Research

JMC SPECIALTY	0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	5%1+	NO RESEARCH INDICATED
Reporting/editing	35.0	19.4	14.6	8.7	2.9	1.0	18.4
Advertising/pr	23.8	25.4	25.4	9.5	9.5	3.2	3.2
Radio/television	31.9	27.7	10.6	12.8	6.4	4.3	6.4
Ethics	18.4	26.3	28.9	10.5	5.3	0.0	10.5
History	25.0	25.0	22.9	16.7	4.2	0.0	6.3
International	24.3	24.3	18.9	16.2	8.1	2.7	5.4
Law	26.2	26.2	21.4	4.8	7.1	2.4	11.9
Mass comm/society	21.2	18.2	22.2	16.2	10.1	7.1	5.1
Theory/methodology	16.3	18.8	23.8	16.3	11.3	10.0	3.8

Third, the faculty members involved in reporting/editing presented fewer convention papers and published fewer journal articles than average. Almost 44% of the reporting/editing teachers said they had not presented a single refereed convention paper in the past five years. Similarly, 41.7% had not published a single article in a refereed journal in the past five years.

The most productive specialty for the presentation of papers was theory/methodology. Mass comm/society was the second most productive specialty, and international third. Faculty members in theory/methodology were also the most productive in the publication of articles. (See Tables VII and VIII on the following page)

Table VII

The Respondents' Productivity In Refereed Convention Papers, By Specialty

(For the last five years)

JMC SPECIALTY	0 PAPERS	1-3 PAPERS	4-6 PAPERS	7-10 PAPERS	11+ PAPERS
Reporting/editing	43.7%	22.3%	17.5%	11.7%	4.9%
Advertising/pr	15.9	33.3	17.5	11.1	22.2
Radio/television	27.7	19.1	21.3	23.4	8.5
Ethics	31.6	28.9	21.1	7.9	10.5
History	28.6	24.5	22.4	14.3	10.2
International	18.9	21.6	29.7	18.9	10.8
Law	34.9	23.3	16.3	11.6	14.0
Mass comm/society	14.0	25.0	25.0	22.0	14.0
Theory/methodology	10.0	20.0	30.0	17.5	22.5

Table VIII

The Respondents' Productivity In Refereed Journal Articles, By Specialty

(For the last five years)

JMC SPECIALTY	0 ARTICLES	1-3 ARTICLES	4-6 ARTICLES	7-10 ARTICLES	11+ ARTICLES
Reporting/editing	41.7%	39.8%	10.7%	5.8%	1.9%
Advertising/pr	28.6	44.4	12.7	7.9	6.3
Radio/television	34.0	36.2	19.1	6.4	4.3
Ethics	31.6	39.5	13.2	13.2	2.6
History	32.7	34.7	18.4	8.2	6.1
International	27.0	51.4	16.2	5.4	0.0
Law	37.2	27.9	20.9	9.3	4.7
Mass comm/society	23.0	42.0	22.0	7.0	6.0
Theory/methodology	11.3	48.8	20.0	11.3	8.8

CHANGES OVER TIME. Standards change, and schools seem to be demanding more of new faculty members: more Ph.D.s and more research. Medsger found that the percentage of faculty members with Ph.D.s doubled in recent years: that 84% of the faculty members who had taught 10 or fewer years had doctorates, compared to 42% of the faculty members who had taught more than 10 years

This study's findings were dramatically different. This study found that the longer faculty members taught, the more -- not less -- likely they were to have Ph.D.s. $X^2 = 9.314$, df = 3, p. = $<$ .025. Almost 89% of the most experienced faculty members had Ph.D.s, compared to 68.8% of the least experienced.[22] (See Table IX)

Table IX

The Respondents' Degrees
And Years Of Teaching Experience

YEARS TAUGHT	N	MASTER'S	N	DOCTORATE
1-5 years	20	31.3%	44	68.8%
6-10 years	15	25.4	44	74.6
11-15 years	9	23.7	29	76.3
16+ years	10	11.5	77	88.5

There are several possible explanations for the trend Some new faculty members (ABD's, or "All But Dissertations") are working on their degrees. Other new faculty members start work on their Ph.D.s after entering academia. Also, M.A.s may be more likely to leave academia and return to their industry. Or, if the people hired with M.A.s are among JMC's most experienced professionals (many had worked for the media 20 or 30 years), they may have fewer years left before retirement, and therefore teach for shorter periods of time. Or, without Ph.D.s and research, more M.A.s may be denied tenure and driven from the field. (That may be the topic for another study.)

Medsger also found that senior faculty members had more professional experience than newer faculty members: that only 38% of her respondents 44 or younger had more than 10 years experience, compared to 41% of those 45 to 59, and to 67% of those 60 or older.

This study also compared faculty members' years of teaching experience to their years of professional experience, and found a significant relationship. $X^2 = 21.14$, df = 12, p. $<$ .048. The results confirm Medsger's findings. Compared to long-term faculty members, newer faculty members had less professional experience. Only 18.8% of the faculty members who had taught 1 to 5 years had 16 or more years of professional experience, compared to 37.2% of the faculty members who had taught 16 or more years. (See Table X)

Table X

The Respondents' Years of Teaching
And Years Of Professional Experience

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	1-5 YEARS TEACHING	6-10 YEARS TEACHING	11-15 YEARS TEACHING	16+ YEARS TEACHING
1-5 Years	27.5%	16.7%	21.6%	31.4%
1-10 Years	27.5	21.7	21.6	18.6
11-15 Years	24.6	26.7	21.6	7.0
16+ Years	18.8	31.7	29.7	37.2

OTHER COMPARISONS. Briefly, the authors also compared the respondents involved in reporting/editing to their colleagues on two other variables.

Sixty-three percent of the faculty members who taught reporting/editing were male, fewer than the average of 68.1%. The largest percentages of women taught in law (39.5%) and advertising/public relations (38.1%). International had the smallest percentage of women, 24.3%. (See Table XIII on Page 21 in the Appendix)

Finally, faculty members involved in reporting/editing devoted slightly more of their time to teaching. (See Table XIV on Page 21 in the Appendix)

Discussion And Conclusions

Medsger found that 17% of JMC's faculty members had no professional experience, and that 47% had less than 10 years of professional experience. Medsger also found that 84% percent of JMC's newest faculty members had Ph.D.s, compared to only 42% percent of the faculty members who had taught more than 10 years.

This study confirmed some of Medsger's findings, but also reached some dramatically different conclusions. This study found that 47.0% of JMC's educators (a percentage similar to Medsger's) had 10 or fewer years of professional experience. Also like Medsger, this study found that JMC's newest faculty members did not have as much professional experience as long-term faculty members.

Unlike Medsger, this study found that only 4.3% of JMC's educators had no professional experience, far below her figure of 17%. The mean for JMC faculty members was 12.1 years.

This study's findings were also dramatically different on a second issue. The longer this study's respondents had taught, the more likely they were to have earned Ph.D.s. Almost 89% of the respondents who had taught 16 or more years had Ph.D.s, compared to 68.8% of the respondents who had taught 0 to 5 years, a significant difference.

Some differences between the two studies may be explained by the fact that they asked their respondents slightly different questions and provided slightly different categories for their answers.

There were also other problems, however. How much professional experience is enough? Critics often suggest a minimum of 10 years, but rarely explain or justify that figure (or acknowledge the possibility that different faculty members with different specialties may benefit from different types of experiences).

Noting JMC's growing diversity, this study separated and compared the faculty members in JMC's largest specialties, and found that 53.3% of those teaching in three skills areas (advertising/public relations, radio/television, and reporting/ editing) had 11 or more years of professional experience, compared to 43.7% of the faculty members in concept areas. The figure was even higher for respondents who taught reporting/editing. Sixty-one percent of the faculty members who taught reporting/editing had 11 or more years of professional experience, and the mean was 14.5 years. Moreover, none of the respondents who taught reporting/editing said they had no professional experience, although three (2.9%) failed to answer the question, leaving it blank.

This study also examined two other stereotypes: (1) that every new faculty member must have a Ph.D., and (2) that every faculty member must conduct research. This study found little evidence to support those stereotypes. Rather, JMC's requirements seemed to vary from specialty to specialty. Faculty members who taught reporting/editing were among the least likely to have Ph.D.s and least likely to present refereed convention papers and to publish refereed journal articles. Still, those faculty members succeeded in academia, rising through the ranks at rates slightly higher than average. The skills areas -- especially advertising/public relations and reporting/editing -- employed more M.A.s than average, presumably because of their years of professional experience.

Critics concerned about the education of students preparing to work for newspapers might look more specifically at the faculty members who instruct those students -- increasingly, a minority in JMC education. Critics might also look at JMC's other specialties and consider whether the faculty members in every specialty require the same newsroom experience.

Finally, this study, too, has flaws. Its data were originally gathered for another purpose, and respondents were asked to identify their primary areas of specialization. On average, they marked 2.21 specialties, and there was some overlap in respondents' involvement in JMC's skills and concept areas. Still, this study's findings were consistent, even when approached from different perspectives. Also, the authors eliminated any overlap between the skills and concept areas while making new comparisons and conducting tests of significance.

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Table XI

The Respondents' Rank

JMC SPECIALTY	INSTRUCTOR	ASSISTANT	ASSOCIATE	PROFESSOR	OTHER
Reporting/editing	8.7%	26.2%	26.2%	32.0%	6.8%
Advertising/pr	11.1	38.1	22.2	17.5	11.1
Radio/television	14.9	38.3	25.5	14.9	6.4
Ethics	2.6	2.6	42.1	44.7	5.3
History	6.1	14.3	38.8	36.7	4.1
International	2.7	27.0	24.3	37.8	8.1
Law	11.6	23.3	23.3	37.2	2.3
Mass comm/society	8.0	23.0	26.0	33.0	10.0
Theory/methodology	6.3	26.3	27.5	30.0	10.0
AVERAGE	8.0	24.3	28.4	31.5	7.1

Table XII

Teaching Experience:
Years Taught Full-Time

JMC SPECIALTY	0-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-15 YEARS	16+ YEARS
Reporting/editing	19.6%	24.7%	19.6%	36.1%
Advertising/pr	37.3	27.1	6.8	28.8
Radio/television	46.7	28.9	6.7	17.8
Ethics	13.5	13.5	27.0	45.9
History	14.9	17.0	17.0	51.1
International	26.5	29.4	2.9	41.2
Law	28.6	16.7	16.7	38.1
Mass comm/society	26.3	24.2	16.8	32.6
Theory/methodology	26.0	24.7	17.8	31.5
AVERAGE	26.6	22.9	14.6	35.9

Table XIII

The Respondents' Gender

JMC SPECIALTY	MALE	FEMALE
Reporting/editing	63.1%	36.9%
Advertising/pr	61.9	38.1
Radio/television	69.6	30.4
Ethics	71.1	28.9
History	69.4	30.6
International	75.7	24.3
Law	60.5	39.5
Mass comm/society	69.7	30.3
Theory/methodology	72.2	27.8
AVERAGE	68.1	31.9

Table XIV

Percentage Of Time Devoted To Teaching

JMC SPECIALTY	0-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	51+	NONE INDICATED
Reporting/editing	2.9	7.8	5.8	9.7	19.4	50.5	3.9
Advertising/pr	4.8	3.2	12.7	9.5	25.4	42.9	1.6
Radio/television	4.3	0.0	2.1	17.0	19.1	53.2	4.3
Ethics	2.6	13.2	10.5	10.5	21.1	42.1	0.0
History	4.2	2.1	6.3	10.4	29.2	47.9	0.0
International	0.0	0.0	18.9	13.5	24.3	40.5	2.7
Law	2.4	2.4	7.1	9.5	26.2	50.0	2.4
Mass comm/society	2.0	7.1	6.1	18.2	27.3	33.3	6.1
Theory/methodology	0.0	3.8	12.5	11.3	25.0	38.8	8.8

Endnotes

1. Betty Medsger. Winds of Change: Challenges Confronting Journalism Education. Arlington, Vir.: The Freedom Forum, 1996, p. 7.

2. Gerald C. Stone. "Professional experience gap between Ph.D.s, non-Ph.D.s narrows, 'Roundtable' discloses." Journalism Educator, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring 1982), p. 5.

3. Fred Fedler and Tim Counts. "National J-faculty survey reveals job likes, dislikes." Journalism Educator, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Autumn 1982), p. 3.

4. David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit. "A profile of JMC educators: traits, attitudes and values." Journalism Educator. Summer 1988 (Vol. 43, No. 2), p. 16.

5. A growing number of JMC's law professors have completed law school: Roy Moore and Richard Labunski of the University of Kentucky, Robert Trager of the University of Colorado, Jay Wright of Syracuse University, Michael Sewell of Texas Wesleyan, Sandy Davidson of the University of Missouri, Roy Leeper of Northwest Missouri State University, Wayne Overbeck of California State-Fullerton, Matt Bunker of the University of Alabama, David Womack of Temple University, Laurence Alexander of the University of Florida, Jeanne Scafella of East Carolina, Erik Collins of the University of South Carolina, Jon Dilts of Indiana University, Steven Helle of the University of Illinois, and Kathy Fitzpatrick of Southern Methodist University, for example.

6. Gerald M. Kosicki and Lee B. Becker. "Annual Survey of Enrollment and Degrees Awarded." Journalism & Mass Communication Educator, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Autumn 1996), p. 10.

7. Stone. "Professional experience gap between Ph.D.s, non-Ph.D.s narrows, 'Roundtable' discloses," p. 4.

8. Quoted in "How to make Schools of Journalism better" by Charles-Gene McDaniel. Editor & Publisher, Aug. 7, 1982, p. 10.

9. Ben H. Bagdikian. "Three Problems With J-Schools." Presstime, September 1990, p. 32.

10. Steve Weinberg. "Bridging the chasm." The Quill, October 1990, p. 27.

11. Steve Weinberg. "Requiring All Journalism Professors to Have Doctorates Is Wrong Headed." The Chronicle Of Higher Education, May 29, 1991, p. B1.

12. David C. Henley. "What do students need more of -- theory or skills?" Publishers' Auxiliary, Aug. 3, 1992, p. 12.

13. Everette E. Dennis. "Whatever Happened to Marse Robert's Dream? The Dilemma of American Journalism Education." Gannett Center Journal, Spring 1988, p. 4. For a discussion of the critics' complaints, see "Growing body of evidence refutes some criticisms of journalism schools" by Fred Fedler. Ecquid Novi, Vol. 16, Nos. 1 and 2 (1995), pp. 54-55. SEE ALSO: "Triumph of the Chi-squares" by Ron Lovell. The Quill, October 1987, pp. 22-24. SEE ALSO: "Whither Journalism-School Reform?" by Lee Smith. The Masthead, Winter 1977, p. 26. SEE ALSO: "Editors from small papers and large differ on how well journalism degrees are preparing new journalists" by Robert H. Giles. ASNE Bulletin, April 1990, pp. 30-31. SEE ALSO: Journalism Education: Facing Up to the Challenge of Change. Washington, D.C.: Committee on Education For Journalism of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. April 1990, p. 1.

14. Will Lindley. "Message to journalism faculty: Bridge the gap." Editor & Publisher, July 30, 1988, p. 18.

15. Medsger. Winds of Change, p. 2.

16. Ibid., p. 42.

17. Ibid., p. 74.

18. Ibid., p. 74.

19. Faculty members who checked the "Other" category listed nearly 20 different specialties, including: cultural studies, literary journalism, magazines, media management, minorities and/or women, publication design, scholastic journalism, science and/or health communication, technology/new media, and telecom, for example.

20. Fred Fedler, Maria Cristina Santana, Tim Counts, and Arlen Carey. "JMC Faculty Divided: Majority Finds Dozen Uses For Research." A paper presented to the Mass Communication & Society Division at the 1997 national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Chicago.

21. The statistics vary slightly from those in the original analysis. This analysis does not include the 12 respondents who said they had no professional experience or nine who did not answer the question.

22. Also, 123 of the respondents had taught 10 or fewer years, and 88 (71.5%) had Ph.D.s; 125 had taught 11 or more years, and 106 (84.8%) had Ph.D.s. Also, of all Ph.D.s now teaching, 45.4% had taught 10 or fewer years, while 54.6% had taught 11 or more years.

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Journalism's Status In Academia:

A Candidate For Elimination?

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Journalism's Status In Academia: A Candidate For Elimination?

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In 1983, Dennis warned that journalism education "appears to be on the ragged edge of being so hopelessly outdated that its usefulness may soon be severely questioned."[1] Since then, other authors have asked whether journalism education is becoming "an endangered species."[2]

The question arises because journalism and mass communication (JMC) programs are experiencing a multitude of problems. At the same time, severe financial pressures are forcing colleges and universities to cut back, even to eliminate some programs and faculty members.[3]

To learn more about JMC's ability to survive in this era of retrenchment, the authors surveyed more than 600 academicians from all disciplines and all types of colleges and universities. The authors asked the respondents about cutbacks at their institutions, about problems that might justify a program's elimination, and about which programs they would eliminate. The results reveal more about JMC's status, the reasons for some of JMC's problems, and the support that JMC can expect from colleagues in other fields.

AN ERA OF RETRENCHMENT. Beginning in about 1990, huge deficits and a myriad of new demands forced legislatures to re-examine their priorities and to insist that every state agency, including colleges and universities, increase their productivity. Private institutions, too, have experienced cutbacks. By 1996, *Newsweek* estimated that only 20% of the nation's colleges and universities were healthy financially, and that 60% were struggling to adjust.[4]

Colleges have increased their productivity by increasing teaching loads and class sizes, freezing or eliminating some positions, and -- in extreme cases -- eliminating entire departments. Examples include:

*The University of Virginia's 15-campus system eliminated 49 degree programs and hundreds of faculty members.

*The president of Northwestern eliminated programs in geography, nursing, and evolutionary biology "after deciding they could never be first-rate."[5]

*The University of Rochester announced plans to reduce its student body by 20% and faculty by 10%. Four graduate programs were threatened with elimination.[6]

*The University of Pennsylvania eliminated the departments of American civilization and regional science. A third department, religious studies, was also threatened.[7]

The most pessimistic observers expect entire institutions to close, as many as 1,000 of the 3,600 in the United States.[8]

JMC'S PROBLEMS AND STATUS. JMC programs face serious internal problems, including low budgets; large enrollments; a scarcity of jobs for their graduates; technological changes that require new and expensive equipment; and professionals who, at times, seem impossible to satisfy.[9] Some critics also dislike JMC's structure. Traditionally, JMC programs have offered sequences in reporting, broadcasting, advertising, public relations, photojournalism, magazines, etc.

Blanchard and Christ warn that universities with limited resources will no longer tolerate duplicating specializations with separate courses such as writing for television, writing for newspapers, writing for public relations, and writing for advertising. Blanchard and Christ add that the communications revolution (the media's convergence and related trends) is making JMC's traditional sequences obsolete. They continue:

> ...there are often competing, sometimes warring, departments, schools, or divisions of speech, journalism, broadcasting, telecommunications, mass communications, communication arts, communication and theater, and film and other industrial or technological rather than intellectual, designations. Even when not overtly competing for resources and intellectual turf, separate programs related to the mass communication field by their very division tend to inhibit the development of its potential.[10]

Other critics, especially professionals, dislike JMC's emphasis on Ph.D.'s and research. Many want schools to hire only experienced practitioners, and to place more emphasis on skills courses.[11] Medsger, for example, complains that 17% of the field's educators have never worked full-time as journalists and that 47% have fewer than 10 years of journalism experience. "It's a dangerous trend," Medsger says. "It means we're taking the expertise out of the classroom."[12]

Reese Cleghorn calls Medsger's findings shocking. "Work in the field," Cleghorn states, "...is being demeaned. Academic departments (and their universities) are engaged in a foolish effort to gain or hold respectability with even the most ordinary kind of paper credentialing, often at the expense of quality and intellectual substance."[13]

Other faculty members warn that JMC's status in academia is dangerously low, and some suggest that efforts to implement the professionals' demands may aggravate the problem.

Dennis declares that: "On campus, by any economic measure, journalism schools are second- or third-class citizens. They have massive enrollments and tiny faculties...."[14] Blanchard and Christ agree that JMC has a second-rate status "even among the other professional programs on campus."[15]

To survive and prosper, McCall believes, JMC must become "a more active partner, even an intellectual leader in the university." McCall explains that universities expect every field to contribute to the academic environment of the entire campus, and that, "Typical J-school skills courses directed at vocational preparation can hardly meet this challenge."[16]

To make JMC programs more central to their institution's mission, reformers want them to become more involved with other fields and to offer more courses for non-majors.[17] To achieve parity with other programs, JMC programs may also have to "satisfy faculty qualifications of the entire university community."

Still other observers suggest that JMC is not well-accepted in academia because the discipline: (1) is new, (2) has failed to develop a unique theoretical base, and (3) has never served a true profession.[18]

ELIMINATING JMC. Several JMC programs have already been eliminated, or threatened with elimination. A partial list includes:

*The Department of Communication at the University of Michigan.

*The Department of Journalism at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

*The Department of Journalism at Oregon State University.

*The School of Journalism at Ohio State.

*The Graduate School of Journalism at the University of Western Ontario.[19]

Units at other institutions have been merged or reorganized: at Penn State, San Diego State, Southern Illinois University, the University of Miami, and the University of Southern California, for example. Furthermore, two states -- Louisiana and Tennessee -- have threatened to eliminate every program unable to obtain accreditation.[20]

Dennis cites four reasons for the closures, consolidations, and other threats: (1) university downsizing and budget-cutting; (2) duplication, especially between journalism and communication; (3) the issue of centrality to a university's mission; and (4) a leadership vacuum. "The field," Dennis believes, "has relatively few leaders who are highly visible and notably effective on their campuses. In instance after instance, people in our field have been naive and ineffectual in the competitive campus scene."[21]

Despite the topic's importance, there has been little systematic study of JMC's problems and status. Rather, the debate has been based largely upon opinions, warnings, demands, and counter-demands. To obtain more factual information about JMC's status and ability to survive in this era of retrenchment, the authors surveyed faculty members in other disciplines. The authors wanted to determine other faculty members' attitudes toward JMC and their support (or lack thereof) for its continued role in academia.

Methodology

The 26th edition of the *National Directory of Faculty Members* was published in 1996 and, in three volumes, lists more than 650,000 names and addresses. The entries are arranged alphabetically, by last name, and represent every discipline and every type of college and university: a total of 3,600 institutions in the United States and 240 in Canada.

To draw a sample of more than 600, the authors selected Page 5, then counted down to the 15th name in the first column. They repeated the selection process on every sixth page, but excluded faculty members who teach (1) at community colleges or (2) outside the United States. If the 15th entry on a page did not teach at a four-year institution in the United States, the authors proceeded to the next entry that satisfied their criteria. Both the initial page number and the row were selected at random.

In the spring of 1996, the authors mailed questionnaires to a total of 647 respondents. A cover letter explained that the authors wanted to learn more about academia's problems and about faculty members' priorities in this age of retrenchment. One week later, the authors mailed all 647 respondents postcards, asking them to respond if they had not already done so (and thanking them if they had).

The questionnaire was limited to 12 items that filled both sides of a single sheet of paper (See Appendix A, which follows the four tables). The first questions asked for information about the respondents and their schools: the respondents' gender, rank, and field; whether they taught at a public or private institution; the highest degree offered by their department; and the total number of students enrolled in their institution.

Question 8 asked whether the respondents' institution had experienced any cutbacks during the past three years. Question 9 asked for the respondents' priorities. If their institution was forced to reduce its payroll, would they want it to: (A) cut everyone's salary, (B) eliminate new faculty, (C) eliminate incompetent and unproductive faculty, (D) encourage older faculty to retire, or (E) cut only the salaries of highly-paid faculty?

Question 10 asked about cutting programs. If need be, would the respondents want their institution to: (A) cut every program equally, (B) eliminate only graduate programs, (C) eliminate expensive programs, (D) eliminate small and unproductive programs, or (E) eliminate programs not central to the mission of their institution.

Question 11 asked respondents which problems they considered most serious: "possible reasons for eliminating a program." The problems included: (A) few students, (B) weak students, (C) high expenses, (D) a failure to seek accreditation, (E) a failure to obtain outside funding, (F) an emphasis on vocational training, (G) a weak record of scholarly activity, (H) a failure to employ many Ph.D.'s, (I) a duplication with programs elsewhere in the state, and (J) a weak demand for its graduates.

The respondents were then given an alphabetical list of 37 departments or programs common at many universities and asked, "If you were an administrator and had to eliminate several departments, which five would you be the most likely to eliminate." The list included, as separate entries: (1) advertising/public relations, (2) broadcasting, and (3) journalism. The list also included several other fields that prepare students for a particular type of work: agriculture, architecture, criminal justice, education, hospitality management, nursing, and social work.

Finally, an open-ended question asked respondents to explain their choice of the five departments to be eliminated.

Findings

DEMOGRAPHICS. Twenty-six questionnaires (4.0%) were returned as undeliverable. The authors received 225 replies from the 621 questionnaires that were delivered, for a response rate of 36.2%.

An analysis of the completed questionnaires revealed that 154 (68.4%) of the respondents were men and 69 (30.7%) women.* The respondents were also divided by rank: 5.8% were instructors, 18.2% assistant professors, 29.3% associate professors, and 41.8% professors.

English departments, with 8.4% of the respondents, were most heavily represented. Departments with the next largest representations included business and education, 6.7% each; biology, 6.2%; math, 5.8%; chemistry, 5.3%; psychology, 4.4%; and political science, 4.0%. Only 5 responses (2.2%) came from faculty members in the fields of journalism and/or mass communication. Four of the respondents listed their field as journalism, 1 as broadcasting, and none as advertising/public relations.

Sixty-six (29.3%) of the respondents taught at private institutions and 156 (69.3%) at public institutions. Seventeen percent said the highest degree offered by their department was a bachelor's degree, 33.8% a master's degree, and 44.4% a doctorate. A mean of 14,165 students enrolled in their institutions.

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*These and other percentages do not always add up to 100 because some respondents did not answer every question. Other respondents gave more than one response to some questions. Also, some responses were unusable.

The average faculty member reported devoting a majority of his or her time (52.6%) to teaching. By comparison, the respondents devoted 20.9% of their time to research, 14.2% to administration, 10.3% to service, and 1.5% to other activities. The emphasis on research varied significantly from department to department. Nearly a quarter (24.6%) of the respondents in the hard sciences said they devoted a majority of their time to research, compared to 6.3% or fewer of the faculty members in other fields. (X^2 = 63.5, $p < .001$)

Within the past three years, large numbers of the respondents had witnessed cutbacks at their institution. Eighty percent said their institution had delayed filling faculty lines, and 72.4% said their institution had cut department budgets. Only 35.6% of their institutions had increased faculty teaching loads, the least popular of the listed options. An analysis of all the answers to Question 8 revealed that:

--80.4% of the respondents' institutions had delayed filling faculty lines during the past three years

--72.4% had cut department budgets

--64.0% had increased class sizes

--62.7% had encouraged early retirements

--61.8% had eliminated faculty positions

--43.6% had eliminated some departments

--41.8% had imposed a salary freeze

--35.6% had increased teaching loads

FACULTY PRIORITIES. The respondents were also asked about their priorities: the types of cutbacks they would favor if given the responsibility of deciding how their institution should reduce its faculty payroll. The most popular idea was the encouragement of early retirements. The next most popular idea was the elimination of deadwood, regardless of tenure. The least popular idea was the elimination of new (untenured) faculty:

--58.2% of the respondents favored offering inducements to encourage older faculty members to retire early

--31.6% favored eliminating their institution's least competent and productive faculty, regardless of tenure

--20.9% favored cutting everyone's salary

--12.9% favored cutting the salaries of only their institution's highest-paid faculty members

--4.0% favored eliminating the newest (untenured) faculty members at their institution

Senior faculty members -- the ones most likely to be affected by the proposal -- were significantly more likely to favor the idea of offering inducements for early retirements, suggesting that many would welcome the idea. Thirty-one percent of the instructors, 46.3% of the assistant professors, 65.2% of the associate professors, and 63.9% of the professors supported the idea. ($X^2 = 11.2$, $p < .05$)

The respondents' answers to another question were not encouraging for any program that fails to clearly help an institution achieve its central mission. If their institution was forced to cut some programs next year, more than half the respondents would eliminate programs not central to their institution's mission. More specifically:

--57.8% of the respondents would eliminate programs not central to the mission of their institution

--38.7% would eliminate their institution's smallest and least productive programs

--12.4% would cut every program equally

--3.1% would eliminate their institution's most expensive programs

--1.8% would eliminate only graduate programs

The respondents were also asked which three problems they considered most serious: possible reasons for eliminating a program. The respondents did not seem to care whether a program received outside funding or employed few Ph.D.s. The respondents were, however, concerned about (and more likely to eliminate) programs with few or weak students, and programs whose students were unable to find jobs in their field:

--53.8% of the respondents would eliminate programs that attract few students

--44.4% would eliminate programs that attract weak students

--42.7% would eliminate programs unable to place their graduates in jobs

--36.9% would eliminate programs with a weak record of scholarly activity

--29.8% would eliminate programs duplicated elsewhere in their state

--24.9% would eliminate programs that emphasize trade or vocational training

--22.2% would eliminate programs that never seek accreditation

--22.2% would eliminate programs that are unusually expensive

--7.1% would eliminate programs that have more M.A.'s than Ph.D.'s on their staffs

--4.4% would eliminate programs that receive little outside funding

Finally, the respondents were given the list of 37 common programs and asked which five they would be most likely to eliminate. Thirty-seven respondents (16.4%) did not answer the question and explained that the choices were not applicable to their institution or that they were not familiar with the issues. Others said their choices would depend upon student needs and upon an individual program's strengths and weaknesses. Several of the respondents explained that they would eliminate any weak program, regardless of its field. They would look at a program's history, productivity, possible combination with other departments, and a host of other educational and political issues.

Still, 188 of the respondents (83.6%) did list the programs they would eliminate (See Table I). The results were encouraging for journalism, but not for advertising/public relations or broadcasting. Programs that 10% or more of the respondents said they would eliminate, and the specific number and percentage that would eliminate each program, included:

--Hospitality management, 132 (58.7%)

--Home economics, 96 (42.7%)

--Judaic studies, 88 (39.1%)

--Women's studies, 84 (37.3%)

--African-American studies, 76 (33.8%)

--Advertising/public relations, 71 (31.6%)

--Broadcasting, 59 (26.2%)

--Physical education, 32 (14.2%)

--Criminal justice, 26 (11.6%)

Not a single respondent proposed eliminating chemistry or mathematics. Only three (or fewer) proposed eliminating art, biology, computer science, economics, English, foreign languages, history, political science, and psychology.

Generally, the respondents explained that their two top choices for elimination -- hospitality management and home economics -- were irrelevant to their institution's mission or to the core of a liberal arts education. Respondents also said that those fields are too vocational and could taught at a community college.

Respondents who favored eliminating African-American, Judaic, and women's studies again explained that the programs were not essential to their institution's mission. Many added that African-American, Judaic, and women's studies were "fringe" programs instituted for political rather than academic reasons. "They resulted," said one respondent, "from the political correctness movement."

The final, open-ended question asked respondents to explain their choice of the five programs to be eliminated. The authors categorized the respondents' answers and found that some repeated issues listed in Question 11. Others, however, did not, and the authors developed a total of 25 categories (See Table II). The respondents' No. 1 reason for eliminating a program was that it could be combined with others. The respondents also said that some programs were too vocational (Reason No. 2), were not essential to their institution's mission (Reason No. 3), and were too narrow or specialized (Reason No. 4).

JOURNALISM'S STATUS IN ACADEMIA. Only 6 of the 225 respondents (2.7%) said they would eliminate journalism. Thus, journalism did better than major fields such as business, education, sociology, speech, statistics, and theater.

However, 71 of the respondents (31.6%) said they would eliminate advertising/public relations, and 59 (26.2%) said they would eliminate broadcasting. Those results are difficult to interpret (and may be much better -- or worse -- than indicated by the statistics alone).

Many four-year institutions do not offer and, therefore, cannot eliminate hospitality management or home economics. Furthermore, some administrators may be reluctant to eliminate the newer and politically sensitive areas of African-American, Judaic, and women's studies. If an institution cannot eliminate any of those five programs, advertising/public relations and broadcasting may become its No. 1 and No. 2 candidates for elimination.

Why? Six reasons predominate (See Table III). Respondents who said they would eliminate advertising/public relations and broadcasting (and also journalism) said the fields:

1. Involve trade or vocational rather than intellectual training
2. Should be taught at community colleges, trade schools, or private business schools, not universities
3. Can be taught on-the-job
4. Are peripheral to central mission of their institution
5. Contribute little to a liberal arts education
6. Are among universities' "least scholarly pursuits"

Not a single critic mentioned the fact that JMC programs are new, or complained that JMC education has failed to develop a unique theoretical base.

There were inconsistencies, however. Some respondents complained that fields such as home economics, hospitality management, broadcasting, and advertising/public relations were too vocational. Others, however, said they would eliminate programs that did not help students obtain jobs. That was a criticism of African-American, Judaic, and women's studies. One respondent complained that a degree in ethnic studies "has no future for jobs in the work world." A second respondent agreed that, "These are departments which cannot provide clearly defined careers for their students...."

The results for advertising/public relations and broadcasting may not, however, be as dismal as the numbers suggest. Many of the respondents who listed programs they would eliminate explained in answer to another question that they would retain the programs' content, moving it to other departments. More than a dozen respondents suggested moving broadcasting to journalism. Others suggested moving advertising/public relations to journalism. By a margin of almost 3-1, however, the respondents favored moving advertising/public relations to business.

That was part of a broader trend. To save jobs and money, the respondents proposed more than a dozen mergers. Many suggested merging African-American, Judaic, and/or women's studies with history, literature, philosophy, or sociology. Even some of the programs' proponents proposed merging them with other departments. They explained that mergers would expose more students to the programs' content. "While important," one respondent explained, "topics taught in specialized disciplines emphasizing cultural diversity could be incorporated in core or basic education requirements, thus broadening their ideas to a larger group of students."

Other respondents suggested merging hospitality management with business; music with art; speech with communication (or English or theater); and theater into a school of performing arts.

There were also proposals for three mega mergers: (1) both computer science and statistics with math; (2) anthropology, criminal justice, and social work with sociology; and (3) all of the communication fields into a single school that would include advertising/public relations, broadcasting, communication, journalism, speech, and theater.

Support for the elimination or merger of advertising/public relations, broadcasting, and journalism did not vary significantly by any of six other variables: the respondents' (1) gender; (2) rank; (3) field; (4) whether the respondents' department offered a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctorate; (5) whether the respondents' institution was public or private; or (6) the way in which respondents divided their time between teaching, research, and service.

There were significant differences for other fields. Associate and full professors were more likely than assistant professors to favor eliminating education ($X^2 = 9.6$, $p < .05$). Faculty members in the liberal arts were more likely to favor eliminating engineering ($X^2 = 9.9$, $p < .05$). Faculty members in the liberal arts were also more likely to favor eliminating hospitality management ($X^2 = 12.9$, $p < .05$)

DIFFERENCES BY GENDER AND RANK. Men and women differed significantly in the allocation of their time. Men were almost nine times more likely to report devoting a majority of their time to research ($X^2 = 16.2$, $p < .05$). Men were also more likely to have attained a higher rank. Fifty percent of the men were full professors, compared to 23.5% of the women. Conversely, 13.0% of the men were assistant professors, compared to 30.9% of the women. Twenty-seven percent of the men and 35% of the women were associate professors ($X^2 = 17.1$, $p < .01$). The percentages of the male and female respondents employed as instructors were almost identical: 5.8% vs. 5.9%.

There were also two other significant differences by gender. First, men were almost twice as likely to favor eliminating women's studies: 42.2% vs. 24.6% ($X^2 = 6.3$, $p < .05$). Second, compared to women, men were four times more likely to say that they would eliminate programs not central to the mission of their institution.

Other responses varied by rank. When asked to explain why they favored the elimination of some programs, both senior faculty members and the faculty members in departments that offered doctorates were more likely to explain that a program was vocational or should be offered in a professional or trade school.

Senior faculty members were also more likely to explain that the programs they wanted to eliminate were not essential to the mission of their institution.

DIFFERENCES BY ACTIVITY AND FIELD. There were major differences by activity and field. Many of those differences seemed to reflect the respondents' specialized interests. For example: 76.2% of the faculty members who devoted most of their time to research said they would eliminate programs that produce little scholarly research, compared to only 29.0% of the faculty members who devoted most of their time to teaching ($X^2 = 23.5$, $p < .01$).

Similarly, issues considered a problem by the faculty members in some of academia's fields did not concern the faculty members in other fields.

The differences were most apparent when faculty members were grouped by college (See Table IV).

DIFFERENCES BY INSTITUTION. Some differences by institution may be of particular interest to faculty members in journalism. The differences may also interest new faculty members, especially those deciding where to spend their careers.

Faculty members in departments that offer a doctorate were more likely than average to favor eliminating programs that employ few Ph.D.'s. Curiously, however, they were less likely to favor eliminating programs that attract weak students.

Thirteen percent of the faculty members in departments that offer a doctorate, but only 2.6% of the faculty members at other institutions, would eliminate programs with a preponderance of M.A.'s ($X^2 = 8.9$, $p < .05$). Yet only 38% of the faculty members in departments that offer a doctorate would eliminate programs that attract weak students, compared to 50.0% of the faculty members at schools that offer a B.A. and 52.6% of the faculty members at schools that offer an M.A. ($X^2 = 8.2$, $p < .05$).

Other differences by institution included:

*Respondents at public institutions were more likely to say their departments offer advanced degrees. Thirteen percent of the respondents at public institutions said their department's highest degree was a bachelor's degree, 35.8% a master's degree, and 47.7% a doctorate. The percentages at private institutions were 27.7%, 32.3%, and 40.0%, respectively ($X^2 = 8.3$, $p < .05$).

*Respondents at public institutions were more likely to value accreditation. Twenty-six percent of the respondents at public institutions, compared to 13.6% of those at private institutions, would eliminate programs that fail to seek accreditation ($X^2 = 4.3$, $p < .05$).

*Almost 8% of the respondents at public institutions, but none at private institutions, would eliminate speech ($X^2 = 5.4$, $p < .05$).

*Perhaps because they offer fewer graduate programs, respondents at private institutions were more likely to favor eliminating graduate programs in times of economic hardship. Still, it was not a popular option at any institution. Only 4.5% of the faculty members at private institutions favored eliminating graduate programs, compared to 0.6% of those at public institutions ($X^2 = 4.0$, $p < .05$).

*Respondents at private institutions were more likely to favor eliminating expensive programs: 34.8% vs. 17.3% ($X^2 = 8.2$, $p < .01$).

*Respondents at private institutions were also more likely to favor eliminating physical education: 21.2% vs. 10.9% ($X^2 = 4.1$, $p < .05$).

CENTRALITY AND VOCATIONALISM. Centrality was a major issue -- and not just for journalism. The respondents repeatedly stated that they would eliminate any program not central to the mission of their institution. Many explained that those programs contribute little to a liberal arts education. The respondents' wording differed, but their statements delivered a consistent message, complaining that such programs were:

*"...the farthest from our core intellectual academic mission."

*"...not important components of a liberal education."

*"...peripheral to the primary liberal arts goal of education."

*"...extremely narrowly focused or specialized and do not contribute substantially to a liberal arts education."

Finally, the questionnaire also listed seven other fields that seem to train students for a particular type of work: agriculture, architecture, criminal justice, education, hospitality management, nursing, and social work. On average, each of those fields received 32.3 votes for elimination, (a figure inflated by the 132 votes to eliminate hospitality management). Without hospitality management, the remaining fields received an average of 15.7 votes for elimination, still more than average.

Discussion And Conclusions

JMC educators worry about their field's problems and, especially, about recent cutbacks and the elimination of some programs. The authors of this article surveyed faculty members from every discipline and from every type of college and university -- and found that JMC's problems are not unusual. Rather, their problems reflect widespread changes within academia: changes that affect most departments.

Forty-four percent of the respondents reported that their institution had eliminated some departments, obviously not all JMC departments. At least five other departments seem to be more vulnerable to elimination than any in JMC: hospitality management; home economics; and Judaic, women's, and African-American studies.

The respondents' comments also suggest that other generalizations are mistaken. Critics may exaggerate the amount of time that faculty members devote to research, especially faculty members in the liberal arts. JMC educators, on the other hand, may exaggerate the importance of Ph.D.'s for acceptance in academia. Also, JMC programs seem more likely to be merged than eliminated. Independent departments of broadcasting and advertising/ public relations are especially vulnerable.

Few respondents -- only 2.7% -- would eliminate their institution's journalism program. Seeing a commonality not evident to everyone in the field, many would actually strengthen their institution's journalism program by creating a single school that would also include advertising/public relations, broadcasting, film, theater, speech, and communication.

Other responses suggest that JMC's problems may be aggravated by the demands of some faculty members and professionals. Their demands conflict with the expectations of colleagues in academia's other fields. Some educators and professionals want JMC programs to emphasize skills courses and to emphasize teaching rather than research. Yet faculty members in other fields often consider those reasons for eliminating a program.

Many of the respondents who said they would eliminate advertising/ public relations and broadcasting, for example, explained that the two fields involve trade or vocational training and are among universities' "least scholarly pursuits." Thirty-seven percent of the respondents favored eliminating programs with a weak record of scholarly activity.

Overall, faculty members in other fields do not seem to hold journalism and its related fields in high regard. They complain that JMC programs are more vocational than intellectual or scholarly. They are skeptical of programs not obviously central to the mission of their institution: that seem too specialized, and that do not contribute to a liberal arts education. Moreover, they group JMC education with other programs of dubious status: with hospitality management; home economics; and African-American, Judaic, and women's studies.

JMC faculty members and administrators may dispute those criticisms, but arguments alone seem unlikely to change the perceptions of colleagues in other fields. And, at some point, those colleagues may influence JMC's role in academia.

Finally, this study suggests eight strategies that JMC programs can adopt to improve their status in academia. Listed in their approximate order of importance, the strategies include: (1) making themselves more central to the mission of their institution; (2) serving even larger numbers of students; (3) recruiting more talented students; (4) doing more to help their students find jobs; (5) improving their record of scholarly activity; (6) developing unique programs, ones not duplicated elsewhere in their state; (7) emphasizing intellectual rather than vocational training; and (8) seeking accreditation.

Table I

Faculty Priorities: The Programs Respondents Would Eliminate

This study's respondents were given a list of 37 programs and asked to mark the five they would be most likely to eliminate. This table lists all 37 programs, beginning with those that the largest number of respondents would eliminate. This table also lists the number and percentage of respondents that would eliminate each program.

132	(58.7%)	Hospitality management
96	(42.7%)	Home economics
88	(39.1%)	Judaic studies
84	(37.3%)	Women's studies
76	(33.8%)	African-American studies
71	(31.6%)	Advertising/public relations
59	(26.2%)	Broadcasting
32	(14.2%)	Physical education
26	(11.6%)	Criminal justice
21	(9.3%)	Agriculture
19	(8.4%)	Pharmacy
18	(8.0%)	Social work
15	(6.7%)	Geography
14	(6.2%)	Anthropology, statistics, and theater
13	(5.8%)	Business, education, and "other"
12	(5.3%)	Speech
10	(4.4%)	Sociology
9	(4.0%)	Architecture
8	(3.6%)	Engineering
7	(3.1%)	Nursing
6	(2.7%)	Journalism
5	(2.2%)	Philosophy
4	(1.8%)	Music
3	(1.3%)	Art, foreign languages, and political science
2	(0.9%)	Biology, computer science, history, and psychology
1	(0.4%)	Economics and English
0	(0.0%)	Chemistry and mathematics

Table II

Reasons For Eliminating Programs

An open-ended question asked respondents to explain their reasons for eliminating programs. The authors categorized the respondents' answers, and this table presents all 25 categories in the order of their importance. The table also lists the total number and percentage of respondents that mentioned each reason.

54 (24.0%)	No need for a unique program; can be combined with another.
36 (16.0%)	Program is vocational in nature or should be offered in a professional or trade school, not a university.
31 (13.8%)	Not essential to the university mission.
19 (8.4%)	Program is too narrow or specialized.
17 (7.6%)	Can't answer. Depends upon the situation.
11 (4.9%)	Program attracts few students.
9 (4.0%)	Program exists because of political correctness.
8 (3.6%)	Community college-level program.
8 (3.6%)	Program does not prepare graduates for careers.
8 (3.6%)	Knowledge can be obtained without university or other formal training.
8 (3.6%)	Weak research program or program is intellectually deficient.
8 (3.6%)	Not applicable.
6 (2.7%)	Respondent would not accept any program cuts.
5 (2.2%)	Program turns out too many graduates for employment opportunities. Its graduates are hard to place.
4 (1.8%)	Program is useless.
4 (1.8%)	Program duplicates others in the state.
4 (1.8%)	Program is unnecessary.
3 (1.3%)	Program is not socially relevant.
2 (0.9%)	Weak academic program.
2 (0.9%)	Program attracts weak students.
2 (0.9%)	Program does not bring in enough outside money to sustain itself.
1 (0.4%)	Program is fraudulent.
1 (0.4%)	Program's discipline is becoming obsolete.
1 (0.4%)	Little demand for the program's curriculum.
1 (0.4%)	Program is too costly to sustain.

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Table III

Comments Explaining Why Respondents Would Eliminate Journalism, Ad/Pr, & Broadcasting

In response to an open-ended question, many of the faculty members who said they would eliminate advertising/public relations, broadcasting, and/or journalism explained their decisions. This table quotes every respondent who favored eliminating one or more of those programs. The table is limited, however, to quoting only the respondents' reasons for eliminating a JMC program (except in cases where a single comment explains why a respondent would eliminate every program he or she listed).

For comparative purposes, this table lists all the programs that each respondent would eliminate. The lists show that journalism is rarely linked with academia's mainstream fields, such as economics, English, history, mathematics, and psychology.

Abbreviations include: "A-A studies" for African American studies, "hosp. man." for hospitality management, "physical ed." for physical education, and "w.s." for women's studies.

1. We do not have the departments listed above. They seem less essential to what I believe to be the mission of a university. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, broadcasting, hosp. man., w.s.)
2. These specialties could easily be folded into existing, larger departments. (A-A studies, criminal justice, home ec., journalism, Judaic studies, w.s.)
3. Combine journalism and broadcasting. (A-A studies, broadcasting, hosp. man., Judaic studies, statistics)
4. While these programs are potentially valuable I don't see them as necessary for the progress/functioning of society and see duplication in some areas -- for example -- broadcasting & journalism. (A-A studies, broadcasting, hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.)
5. I consider them less necessary than the remainder on the list. (Ad/pr, agriculture, geography, home ec., hosp. man., w.s.)
6. They are fraudulent. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, education, hosp. man., sociology, w.s.)
7. First, all five are structured and taught more on the order of professional schools than on the order of mainstream arts and science programs. Second ... these five tend to be mediocre in mainstream arts and sciences-oriented universities because they attract less ambitious and less well-prepared students.... (Ad/pr, agriculture, architecture, criminal justice, hosp. man.)

8. Not relevant to my college, department, or field. (Ad/pr, agriculture, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed.)
9. Peripheral to critical mission in this state university. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, pharmacy)
10. Not conducive to higher education or too narrowly targeted. (A-A studies, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., Judaic studies)
11. Low need, can be combined with other departments very easily. (Broadcasting, home ec., Judaic studies, statistics)
12. Only architecture is an appropriate university subject. The other four are more professional or vocational. (Ad/pr, architecture, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed.)
13. I view broadcasting as a vocational skill. (Broadcasting, physical ed., theater)
14. Broadcasting can be combined in a communications area. (Anthropology, broadcasting, home ec., Judaic studies, philosophy)
15. Relevance to university mission in this state. (A-A studies, broadcasting, Judaic studies, speech, w.s.)
16. May be covered in on-the-job training. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., w.s.)
17. Can be part of other departments. (A-A studies, broadcasting, home ec., Judaic studies, w.s.)
18. Are available in private business schools. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, hosp. man., pharmacy)
19. These departments can be left to the home, culture, or church for education. (A-A studies, broadcasting, home ec., Judaic studies, social work, w.s.)
20. No rationale for expertise. (Ad/pr, education, home ec., Judaic studies, w.s.)
21. A trade school type of course of study. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.
22. Ad/pr and hospitality management are subsets of business. Further redundancies appear in broadcasting, theater, and journalism. A Department of Communications could combine speech with the other three. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.)
23. Not central to liberal education. (A-A studies, broadcasting, criminal justice, journalism, w.s.)
24. Not central to academic mission. (Ad/pr, hosp. man., Judaic studies, theater, w.s.)
25. Not important components of a liberal education. (Ad/pr, home economics, pharmacy, social work, theater)
26. They are all handled well in community colleges -- or could be. (Ad/pr, criminal justice, home ec., hosp. man., speech)
27. Not central to academic mission. Can handle under journalism. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed., social work)
28. These topics are better handled at a trade school. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, criminal justice, hosp. man., social work)
29. Are vocations well staffed by liberal arts graduates. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, geography, hosp. man., physical ed.)
30. I don't see these as vital to the major role of most universities. (A-A studies, broadcasting, hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.)
31. Not essential to the core learning experience. All could be integrated into other programs. (Broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed., w.s.)
32. Not centrally intellectual enterprises. (Ad/pr, agriculture, home

ec., hosp. man., physical ed.)

33. Could be taught in other departments, e.g., advertising in marketing ... or eliminated altogether. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., speech, statistics)

34. As for ad/pr, all society needs is more liars. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, home ec., theater, w.s.)

35. No intellectual content -- except Judaic studies, too specialized. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, business, hosp. man., Judaic studies)

36. They are the farthest from the core intellectual academic mission. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, hosp. man., physical ed., speech)

37. They are most nearly vocational training rather than an intellectual field. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., nursing, social work)

38. Some emphasize segregation or isolation between groups. Others do not need to be in a university. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, broadcasting, home ec., w.s.)

39. Subject matter is duplicated regularly in higher educational institutions.... (Ad/pr, A-A studies, broadcasting, Judaic studies, w.s.)

40. I've chosen only four -- those for which on-the-job training seems more appropriate or for which another field provides adequate background. Journalism can train adwriters and publicists, for example. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, business, hosp. man.)

41. These can be better served by non-academic institutions and on-the-job training. (Ad/pr, business, hosp. man.)

42. They are either too narrowly defined or useless or divisive. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, home ec., hosp. man., w.s.)

43. These are applied fields which need sound liberal arts education rather than specific, capitalistic content. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, business, home ec., hosp. man.)

44. They are more job-training oriented than research-scholarship. Students have non-college alternatives for job training. For example, I would keep a communication department but not a broadcasting department. They are peripheral to the primary liberal arts goal of education. (Ad/pr, agriculture, broadcasting, hosp. man.)

45. Ad/pr, broadcasting, journalism could be blended into one. (ALSO: A-A studies, agriculture, architecture, criminal justice, home ec., hospitality man., Judaic studies, pharmacy)

46. Not central. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, home ec., hosp. man., w.s.)

47. I don't believe these departments are central to a university's general mission and could be offered by technical/vocational schools. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, criminal justice, home ec., hosp. man.)

48. Some contribute least to the liberal arts in general (are too specific) while others do not provide critical vocational skills. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, home ec., hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.)

49. Not academic disciplines. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, hosp. man., nursing, pharmacy)

50. Advertising/public relations, African-American studies, and Judaic studies could be incorporated into other departments. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, home ec., hosp. man., Judaic studies)

51. Primarily emphasizes trade or vocational training. Not very academic. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, hosp. man., journalism, Judaic studies)

52. These departments are not central to the mission of a university. Journalism, advertising, and pr can be learned with on-the-job training. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., journalism, physical ed.)

53. These programs offer little of positive value and in some instances are really negative. Often their functions can be handled by other disciplines. (Ad/pr, education, hosp. man.)
54. Would be least critical in a well-rounded liberal arts university. These programs may also be available at technical or professional schools. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., pharmacy, physical ed.)
55. Many of these are trade oriented and have little relevance to society. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, education, home ec., hosp. man.)
56. These departments seem more vocational in content and aims. The least scholarly pursuits. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., theater)
57. Least related to my most important goals for a university: research, liberal arts education, professional training.... (Ad/pr, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed.)
58. Need not be a separate department. (Ad/pr, agriculture, hosp. man., statistics)
59. Specialized training institutions predominate in ... three areas. (Agriculture, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., Judaic studies)
60. These departments are more vocational than academic and could be taken at junior colleges or specialized schools. (Broadcasting, criminal justice, home ec., hosp. man., pharmacy)
61. They provide curricula peripheral to the arts and sciences and humanities, i.e. they are vocational training, and involve little or no material of general value or likely to integrate easily with general educational goals. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man.)
62. Not relevant to a research-oriented institution. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed.)
63. These departments offer degree programs of questionable value. Students could major in substantive programs and learn technical skills on-the-job. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, education, hosp. man., journalism)
64. These are peripheral to the core at most universities. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.)
65. Selected because students could study these in other institutions. (Ad/pr, business, hosp. man.)
66. Would merge with journalism. (A-A studies, broadcasting, home ec., Judaic studies, w.s.)
67. All could be incorporated in other departments. (Broadcasting, hosp. man., Judaic studies, speech, statistics)
68. Least justification intellectually. (Ad/pr, business, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed.)
69. I question whether they truly belong in an academic setting. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man., physical ed., theater)
70. They are done better elsewhere. (Ad/pr, agriculture, broadcasting, criminal justice, home ec., hosp. man., pharmacy)
71. Broadcasting and political science are fields with few job openings and could be entered, career-wise, through an alternative avenue. (A-A studies, broadcasting, Judaic studies, political science, w.s.)
72. Broadcasting and hospitality management seem to be sub specialties of communications and business management. (A-A studies, broadcasting, hosp. man., social work, w.s.)
73. Too many graduates, not enough jobs. (Ad/pr, anthropology, broadcasting, economics, hosp. man.)

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74. We're a liberal arts college, and these programs are professional/pre-professional. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, business, hosp. man., nursing)
75. The departments seem to me to be peripheral to a sound university-level education. (Ad/pr, home ec., hosp. man.)
76. Not central to our mission. (Ad/pr, architecture, engineering, home ec., hosp. man.)
77. Combine broadcasting with journalism. (Broadcasting, computer science, music, speech, statistics)
78. Programs are extremely narrowly focused or specialized and do not contribute substantially to a liberal arts education. Some could also be subsumed under other departments/programs, e.g. advertising under business. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, home ec., hosp. man., nursing)
79. Could combine instead of eliminate, e.g. broadcasting with journalism. (Broadcasting, business, geography, philosophy, theater)
80. This is a technical subject best taught in separate technical school. (A-A studies, broadcasting, hosp. man., Judaic studies, w.s.)
81. Available many places and less career-oriented. (Broadcasting, home ec., geography, hosp. man., theater)
82. Can be absorbed into other programs, e.g. advertising into business. (Ad/pr, geography, home ec., hosp. man., social work)
83. All could be included in established courses; if something has to be eliminated other departments can incorporate the content. (A-A studies, broadcasting, journalism, physical ed., statistics)
84. More important to "educate" in basic English/history/language/sciences, etc. Many industries, i.e. broadcasting "train" personnel after they are hired. Universities should not be training people for too specific industries. Should not be a "trade school" Technical-community colleges are best for this. (Ad/pr, A-A studies, broadcasting, Judaic studies, theater, w.s)
85. Advertising should be part of business, broadcasting part of communications. (Ad/pr, broadcasting, criminal justice, home ec., hosp. man., social work)
86. Advertising because the basics are in psychology/sociology/etc. (Ad/pr, engineering, geography, home ec., Judaic studies)
87. Peripheral programs or they belong in a trade school. (A-A studies, broadcasting, criminal justice, home ec., hosp. man., Judaic studies, pharmacy, w.s.)

Table IV

Differences By College

Other significant differences emerged when the respondents were grouped into four common colleges: (1) business, (2) education, (3) the liberal arts and social sciences, and (4) the hard sciences. The differences between faculty members in those colleges include:

*The percentage of women in academia's different fields ranged from a high of 50% in education to a low of 15.0% in business. Thirty-one percent of the respondents in the liberal arts and social sciences and 29.5% in the hard sciences were women.

*85.7% of the respondents in business would eliminate programs that attract few students, compared to 77.8% of those in education, 48.1% of those in the liberal arts and social sciences, and 41.0% of those in the hard sciences ($X^2 = 17.9$, $p < .01$).

*29.1% of the respondents in the liberal arts and social sciences would eliminate programs that never seek accreditation, compared to 19.7% of those in the hard sciences, 16.7% of those in education, and 0.0% of those in business ($X^2 = 9.8$, $p < .05$).

*44.3% of the respondents in the hard sciences would eliminate programs with a weak record of scholarly research, compared to 41.8% of those in the liberal arts and social sciences, 19.0% of those in business and 5.6% of those in education ($X^2 = 13.4$, $p < .01$)

*61.1% of the respondents in education would eliminate programs unable to place many of their graduates in jobs, compared to 57.4% of those in the hard sciences, 47.6% of those in business, and 27.8% of those in the liberal arts and social sciences ($X^2 = 16.2$, $p < .01$).

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Academia's Priorities
In an Era of Retrenchment

INSTRUCTIONS: To help us learn more about today's faculty members -- their work, problems, and priorities -- please answer the following questions. You can simply circle the letter before your answer to most questions.

Section I

1. What is your gender? A. Male B. Female

2. What is your academic rank?
   - A. Instructor
   - B. Assistant professor
   - C. Associate professor
   - D. Professor
   - E. Other

3. What is your department?______________________________

4. About what percentage of your work time do you devote to:
   - A. Teaching______________
   - B. Research______________
   - C. Administration__________
   - D. Service______________
   - E. Other______________

5. At what type of institution do you teach? A. Private B. Public

6. What is the highest degree offered by your department or unit?
   A. Bachelor's B. Master's C. Doctorate D. Other

7. About how many students are enrolled in your school?__________

8. During the past three years, has your institution done any of the following?

A.	Frozen salaries	Yes	No
B.	Increased class sizes	Yes	No
C.	Increased teaching loads	Yes	No
D.	Eliminated faculty positions	Yes	No
E.	Cut department budgets	Yes	No
F.	Eliminated some departments	Yes	No
G.	Encouraged early retirements	Yes	No
H.	Delayed filling faculty lines	Yes	No

9. If your institution is forced to reduce its faculty payroll next year, would you prefer it to:
   - A. Cut everyone's salary
   - B. Eliminate the newest (untenured) faculty members
   - C. Eliminate the least competent and productive faculty members, regardless of tenure
   - D. Offer inducements to encourage older faculty members to retire early
   - E. Ask only your institution's highest-paid faculty members to accept a cut in pay

10. If your institution is forced to cut programs next year, would you prefer it to:
   A. Cut every program equally
   B. Eliminate only graduate programs
   C. Eliminate its most expensive programs
   D. Eliminate its smallest and least productive programs
   E. Eliminate programs not central to the mission of the university

11. Which three of these problems do you consider most serious: possible reasons for eliminating a program? Place a check mark in front of the three:
   A.____Attracts few students
   B.____Attracts weak students
   C.____Is unusually expensive
   D.____Never seeks accreditation
   E.____Receives little outside funding
   F.____Emphasizes trade or vocational training
   G.____Has a weak record of scholarly activity
   H.____Has more M.A.'s than Ph.D.'s on its staff
   I.____Duplicates programs elsewhere in your state
   J.____Is unable to place many of its graduates in jobs in their field

Section II

If you were an administrator and had to eliminate several departments, which five would you be the most likely to eliminate? Place a check mark in front of those five departments.

1._____Advertising/Public Relations
2._____African-American Studies
3._____Agriculture
4._____Anthropology
5._____Architecture
6._____Art
7._____Biology
8._____Broadcasting
9._____Business
10._____Chemistry
11._____Computer Science
12._____Criminal Justice
13._____Economics
14._____Education
15._____Engineering
16._____English
17._____Foreign Languages
18._____Geography
19._____History
20._____Home Economics
21._____Hospitality Management
22._____Journalism
23._____Judaic Studies
24._____Mathematics
25._____Music
26._____Nursing
27._____Pharmacy
28._____Philosophy
29._____Physical Education
30._____Political Science
31._____Psychology
32._____Social Work
33._____Sociology
34._____Speech
35._____Statistics
36._____Theater
37._____Women's Studies
38._____Other__________________

Briefly, explain why you selected those five departments for elimination:

____

____

____

____

Please mail the enclosed questionnaire to Prof. Fred Fedler, School of Communication, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Fla. 32816. You can used the stamped, self-addressed envelope we provide.

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Newsroom Topic Teams: Journalists' Assessments of Effects on News Routines and Newspaper Quality

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Newsroom Topic Teams: Journalists' Assessments of Effects on News Routines and Newspaper Quality

The topic team system has received a great deal of attention in the trade press, but has not been the subject of very much systematic study. This study examines the effects of the newsroom topic team system on news routines and newspaper quality. The study is based on a census survey of journalists in two newsrooms that recently implemented topic teams. These two newspapers, the *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN) and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, are published in different cities but see themselves as fierce competitors in their coverage of the metropolitan Twin Cities region. This is a case study of how journalists in these two Guild newsrooms perceive the effects of topic teams.

Background

Newspapers face fewer resources and more competition for readers' time, and newspaper managers are looking for new, more cost-effective, ways to report, write and deliver the news, and to meet profit goals.[1] Changing technology, especially pagination, has also put more production responsibility squarely in the newsroom.[2] Newsrooms across the country have been experimenting with structural change as a way to respond to these challenges.[3] Newsroom topic teams, also called pods, circles, clusters and an assortment of other names, are one innovation. Teams are organized by content areas that cut across traditional job descriptions and newsroom departments. A team might consist of reporters, editors, a photographer and/or graphic artist, and a "team leader." The idea is to reduce "assembly line" thinking about the process of producing stories, and encourage collaboration between writers, editors and visual artists. Staff members may no longer work for a particular section of the newspaper. News desks and copy desks may disappear and be replaced by "presentation hubs" or "design desks."

Some of the intentions of newsroom teams are to "empower" employees, flatten newsroom hierarchies, and force journalists to focus more of their attention on the needs and desires of readers in planning and producing the newspaper every day. Traditional beats, event-driven coverage, and geography-based deployment of personnel are replaced by content areas, news analysis, and topic-driven coverage. Military-like hierarchies are out; group collaboration is in. Coaches, facilitators and maestros maneuver around "newsrooms without walls." Teams are supposed to "bring together complementary skills and experiences that, by definition, exceed those of any individual on the team."[4]

The ostensible purpose for these managerial innovations is to produce higher quality journalism and better serve reader and advertiser customers. Many of the approaches are adopted from companies that make material products, in which assessment of team performance can be based on productivity goals, product defect rates, costs reductions and other traditional indicators.[5] There is considerable skepticism about whether such measures and approaches are appropriate and desirable for an industry whose primary output consists of information.[6] Nonetheless, team journalism appears to be solidly ensconced in a number of newsrooms around the country, and it is time to start assessing the impact this new organizational structure has on news routines and newspaper quality.

Literature Review

Many studies examine how managerial structure affects newswork. These studies generally examine the influence of management style variables[7], motivational variables[8], ownership variables[9], and marketing orientation[10] on news routines and judgments about newspaper quality, performance, and conduct. Media management texts and casebooks outline many of the research findings and provide guidance about implementation of one managerial strategy over another.[11] These texts acknowledge that managing workers in media organizations provides different challenges than managing those who manufacture products or provide services. The need to foster creativity and professionalism in media workers poses special problems for managers.

One factor of managerial behavior appears to greatly influence journalist perceptions about their jobs; the amount of communication in the newsroom. The perceived atmosphere in the newsroom is better when managers evaluate employees on a regular basis and communicate interpersonally.[12] Journalists want to participate in decisions about their work, and want to have regular feedback from their managers.

Motivational variables contribute to assessments about news work and innovativeness. Journalists have strong needs for participation and autonomy.[13] Polansky and Hughes found that "independence of decision-making authority, the presence of formal control, and a sense of control over one's work and ideas are critical components in facilitating a sense of autonomy and thereby innovation."[14] An increase in centralization and bureaucratization, often a result of larger organizations, tends to breed dissatisfaction because of perceived diminished autonomy.

Whether or not a newspaper has a marketing orientation has been identified as a possible explanation for journalist perceptions about news work and newspaper quality. Several authors have derided the profit orientation of modern newspapering and complained about its effects on journalistic values and practices.[15] Beam argues that environmental uncertainty (when newspaper managers find their community's informational wants and needs to be unpredictable) appears to strengthen an organization's marketing orientation. Uncertainty about how to serve customers leads to the adoption of methods and practices to determine the needs and wants of target markets so as to deliver satisfaction more effectively and efficiently. The community characteristic that affects perceived environmental uncertainty the most is competition.[16]

Another set of studies examines contributors to job satisfaction among journalists.[17] These studies generally conclude that journalists are a difficult bunch to keep happy. Job satisfaction appears to be related to environments that operate efficiently in problem-solving, that provide opportunities to do a good job in informing the public, and that acknowledge journalists' need for unambiguous job descriptions and specific job assignments. Stamm and Underwood found that newsroom policy changes that affected journalists' perceptions about newspaper quality and the balance between business and journalism in the newsroom were most likely to affect job satisfaction. Their study concluded that "journalists are happier when they are about the business of journalism--rather than the business of business."[18] When journalists perceive a drop in newspaper quality or a move toward a marketing orientation, their job satisfaction drops.

Another factor in job satisfaction is a concept from reference group theory called "relative deprivation." The basic idea is that people evaluate their positions in life based on comparisons with others in their reference group, rather than on absolute, objective standards. Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, and Demers[19] argue that the concept applies to job satisfaction in journalism when reporters know of a lesser qualified reporter who has been promoted or rewarded differentially.

Newspaper quality has been studied from a number of perspectives. A key measure of quality has been accuracy, which has been measured and analyzed for more than 50 years.[20] Other studies have examined how readers' and journalists' assessments of news quality compare.[21] Key findings from these studies include the observation that readers and editors do not always agree in their assessments of the importance of some traditional standards of newspaper excellence. For example, Gladney found that editors and readers disagree on the ranking and importance of staff enterprise (aggressive original reporting) and visual appeal (effective, attractive presentation of news through the use of visual tools such as typography, photography, graphics, color, layout, designing). Editors valued staff enterprise and visual appeal more than did readers. Strong local coverage was rated as essential by 94 percent of the editors in Gladney's study, versus an essential rating from 62 percent of readers. Bogart found that a "high ratio of news interpretations and backgrounders to spot news reports" was ranked by editors as third in importance for newspaper quality, but 12th by readers (out of a list of 23). In other words, a number of the measures that editors rate highly for newspaper excellence are not rated highly by readers.

Finally, newsroom teams have received considerable attention in the trade press (see footnote 3), following much discussion in the wider business and managerial literature.[22] Scholarly attention has focused on the content effects of teams in the newsroom.[23] Russial's before-and-after content analysis found that when an Oregon newspaper instituted a "Health and Science Team," there was an increase of 40-50 percent in the amount and section front play of health and science stories in the newspaper. He noted, however, that in the absence of an unrealistic expansion in the amount of newshole, all topic teams could not show the same sort of increase in coverage and play unless other areas traditionally covered in the newspaper were going to receive less coverage or no coverage at all.

Research Hypotheses

The findings from the research literature about the relationship between job satisfaction and the need for organizational efficiency, clear job descriptions, and regular communication among managers and workers, lead the researchers to hypothesize that

H_1: Journalists will have a negative assessment of the team system if they perceive that the news process has been damaged (journalist loss of authority, slower production times, more organizational confusion, less communication).

The findings from the research literature about the relationship between marketing orientation, innovation acceptance, and newspaper quality perceptions lead us to hypothesize that

H_2: Journalists will have a negative assessment of the team system if they perceive that the quality of the newspaper has been damaged (more substantive and mechanical errors, more missed stories, less attention to breaking news, and greater attention to "trend" stories over "beat" stories, more attention to design over story content).

The Case Study

The Twin Cities newspaper market is highly competitive, despite the fact that the (Minneapolis) *Star Tribune* and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* are published in two different cities. In fact, managers at the two newspapers routinely refer to the two cities as the "east metro" (St. Paul) and "west metro" (Minneapolis) as a way to indicate that their market really encompasses both cities and the surrounding suburbs. The *Star Tribune* began distribution of a St. Paul edition of the newspaper in 1987. The Cowles Media-owned *Star Tribune* circulation stands at 393,800 daily and 678,000 Sunday, while the Knight-Ridder-owned *Pioneer Press* circulation is 203,000 daily and 270,600 Sunday. The *Star Tribune* newsroom employs 360; the *Pioneer Press* newsroom employs 240. The Newspaper Guild of the Twin Cities chapter represents members in both newsrooms.

Both newspapers instituted newsroom teams within six months of each other in 1995, after negotiations with the Guild on terms and conditions for the changes. The motivations and strategies for making these changes differed slightly, but in both instances it is clear that newspaper managers felt they needed to move toward a marketing orientation in order to compete successfully in the uncertain environment they faced. Internal documents, local and national trade press accounts, public presentations by top newspaper officials, and our interviews with managers and newsroom personnel confirm that both newspapers meant to move away from a product-focus and toward a focus on serving reader and advertiser customers through a marketing approach.

The changes at the larger *Star Tribune* have received more attention and comment, perhaps because Publisher Joel Kramer and Editor Tim McGuire have been outspoken and visible lightning rods within the industry.[24] Together they instituted a highly controversial corporate reorganization in 1993. Their goals were to "achieve real growth in revenue and profit by serving more needs of our reader and marketer customers, with multiple products and services, in and outside the newspaper, while fulfilling the *Star Tribune*'s public service mission."[25] At that time, the newsroom became part of something called the

Reader Customer Unit, responsible for all activities relating to the readers (reader customer sales and service, reader market research, etc). McGuire became General Manager as well as Editor, with direct responsibility for meeting specific profit goals, a change that caused much alarm in the newsroom.[26] In a 1994 presentation to the University of Minnesota Business School faculty and students, Kramer outlined seven goals for the newsroom. First on the list was reader focus. Journalistic excellence was second. This strong reader/marketing-driven focus colored the newsroom restructuring that followed in 1995.

When the team system was implemented, the top managerial positions went from 13 to seven (news content, features content, visual content, production, administrative activities, change editor, and director of player personnel), led by the "News Leader" Pam Fine. Section coordinating editors reported to content managers, and reporters and copy editors were assigned to one of 16 content-oriented teams with a team leader for each. There were not enough photographers and graphic artists to go around, so they were given assignments to multiple teams. Many of the managerial positions were opened up, so people had to re-apply for their positions. Everyone in the newsroom received a day-and-a-half training session when teams were instituted.

Since then, there has been the expected tinkering with both the corporate and newsroom structure. The Reader Customer Unit was dropped in 1996, and the reader sales and service responsibilities were assigned to another corporate unit. McGuire retained his title as Editor, and added oversight of the paper's digital efforts and other content-related products to his portfolio, with a continued responsibility for profit and financial accountability. "News Leader" Fine's title reverted to Managing Editor after she found that folks outside the newsroom with whom she interacted didn't know what her role was.[27] Team titles and newsroom staff assignments have changed several times.

The rhetoric of the Publisher and Editor throughout the transition made it clear that there was no guarantee that the future of the company lay with the traditional newspaper, but with information products and services that delivered high-value content to readers where and how they wanted to receive it. The effects of these types of pronouncements on newsroom morale were not good.[28] In addition, the newspaper has been embarrassed by several high-profile incidents in which glaring mechanical, production, and substantive errors have led to law suits or berating from public officials, as well as prominent published apologies.[29] This has demoralized staff, who worry that the quality of the news product is suffering.

Across the river, the *Pioneer Press* managers were making their own changes. In 1994, newly-installed Publisher Peter Ridder invested in a $1 million campaign to attract readers with more local, business and entertainment news, increased amenities for advertisers, 11 new newsroom positions and seven additional pages of newshole per week.[30] Editor Walker Lundy and then-Managing Editor Ken Doctor[31] began asking how they could make the newspaper better and make the newsroom a better place to work. These changes were being made within the larger corporate context of the Knight-Ridder chain, which was undergoing a number of upheavals and shifts in priorities and focus.[32] Lundy and Doctor deny that their move toward newsroom teams was mandated by Knight-Ridder corporate managers, but they admit that the *Pioneer Press* is a case study for the chain because the Newspaper Guild is such a strong influence in the newsroom.[33]

Managers at the *Pioneer Press* came up with three reasons why they had to change. The first reason was for readers (readers are changing and we have to keep up to attract them); the second was for the newsroom (we keep making the same mistakes and we are not improving); the third reason was for the future (we have to keep up with the world out there).[34] Because they are the smaller paper in the competition with the *Star Tribune*, a strong motivation for managers at the *Pioneer Press* is "differentiation" of their news product as a strategy for reducing subscriber churn and holding readers. They focus heavily on the "east metro", the north-eastern and south-eastern metro suburbs and a portion of western Wisconsin in their news coverage.

In 1994, two-person teams (1 Guild, 1 management) visited nine newspapers around the country to study the innovations that those newsrooms had instituted. They came back with "show-and-tell" reports that most papers were moving toward teams. In a call for volunteers, 60 people formed groups to work on the plan for a move to the team system. The new structure was unveiled in July of 1995. The "Newsroom Mission Statement" lists four goals: "We will put readers first," "We will cultivate one newsroom," "We will work smarter," and "We will respect each other."[35] The *Pioneer Press* eliminated the copy desk, the layout desk, and the features and metro desks. It instituted content teams (the number has fluctuated--it now stands at 15), assigned copy editors to teams, created a production hub responsible for "designing" the paper, and flattened the management structure from six layers to four, with 12 senior editors and 11 team leaders who are responsible for generating content for each section. A total of 50 people changed jobs. Senior editors and team leaders had four days of off-site training with a newsroom staff member from another Knight-Ridder paper, the San Jose *Mercury News*. All other newsroom staff had one day of Zenger-Miller training on site.

One of the controversial decisions that St. Paul managers made originally was to forego creating a general assignment team. As newsroom staff began to work within the new structure, they quickly discovered that general assignment coverage was slipping and they were missing many breaking stories because they couldn't free up staffers from content teams to cover things as they happened. In July of 1996, several original teams were abandoned and a Cover/General Assignment team was created to try to re-establish a focus on breaking news. As at the *Star Tribune*, tinkering and refinements continue, with staff concerns and grumblings occasionally breaking out into the local alternative press.[36]

It is important to summarize the findings from the research literature about the relationship between a marketing orientation and environmental uncertainty at this point. Clearly, both newspapers in this case study find themselves in a competitive and uncertain environment, and both newspapers have adopted a marketing orientation as a strategy for coping. A strong focus on readers as customers pervades the rhetoric of newspaper managers and the written materials that have guided the introduction of teams in both newsrooms. For the purpose of this study, we have posited that these two newspapers have implemented a marketing orientation, and that newsroom teams are part of the overall strategy of each organization to respond to the market situation.

Method

This study examines journalist assessments of the effects of the newsroom team system on news routines and newspaper quality. The study is based on a series of focus group interviews and a census survey of newsroom staff in the two case study newspapers. Researchers received approval for the study from the Managing Editor and from Guild representatives in each newsroom. Researchers conducted interviews with two newsroom focus groups at the *Pioneer Press* in May 1996 and two newsroom focus groups at the *Star Tribune* in June 1996. Focus group participants included section editors, team leaders, reporters, copy editors, photographers, graphic artists, and layout/production staff.[37]

Based on the information from the focus groups and a review of the literature, a six-page, 80-item questionnaire was designed to elicit journalist responses about the effects of the team system on their work, time management and efficiency issues, assignment of work, quality of journalism, communication in the newsroom, and leadership and responsibility issues. The final question left a large space requesting comments "about the team system and its relationship to news production and news quality." The questionnaire was pretested in August 1996 with seven newsroom staffers representing a variety of job categories. Managers and Guild representatives in both newsrooms approved the final language of the questionnaire, thereby reducing concern about bias toward one point of view or another. The revised questionnaire, along with a cover letter and a stamped return envelope, was delivered in September 1996 to every newsroom staffer at both newspapers. This was 12-15 months after the introduction of teams at these newspapers. Staff at each newspaper helped distribute questionnaires in newsroom mailboxes. A total of 597 questionnaires was distributed (360 to the *Star Tribune* and 237 to the *Pioneer Press*). Two weeks later, staff helped distribute a reminder postcard to newsroom mailboxes. The final number of completed questionnaires returned to researchers was 244, for a response rate of 41 percent. One hundred-fifty respondents wrote comments in the last section.

Upon completion of the coding and data analysis, researchers created two "indexes"--one for judgment about team effects on the news process, and one for judgment about team effects on news quality--by combining several response categories in an additive index. Some of the results will be reported using these indexes.

Because this survey was administered to a census of staff at two case study newspapers, **we do not make any claims about the generalizability of these findings to other situations. Inferential statistical tests are applied where appropriate, but solely for the purpose of clarifying results for this case.**

Results

Respondents to this survey are 59 percent male and 41 percent female. Ninety-three percent of respondents belong to the Guild. The labor-manager breakdown is two-thirds to one-third (respectively). Ninety-five percent of the respondents worked at their newspaper before the team system was implemented (those who had not were asked to turn to the last section for demographics and return the questionnaire). Respondents describe their primary job as being reporter (46 percent), editor (29 percent), layout (5 percent), photographer (5 percent), team leader (4 percent), critic (3 percent), graphics (2 percent), news/copy aides (2 percent), library staff (1 percent) or other (3 percent). Seventy-six percent of respondents work the day shift, while 24 percent work at night. The mean number of years of newspaper experience is 18, while the mean number of years of experience at the specific newspaper is 13. Eighty-six percent of respondents are currently assigned to a team. Forty-six percent of respondents work on a team of six-10 members, while 33 percent work on a team of 11-15 members. Seventy-two percent of respondents are assigned to a team that has been in existence for 10 months or longer.

There is a division of opinion about some of the effects of team journalism. Many respondents wrote in their comments that the team concept is a good one in the abstract, but that it requires a larger staff and more resources, neither of which were forthcoming in these two newsrooms, in order to work well. One person wrote, "The team concept is a wonderful concept. However, to fully make use of its many advantages, resources in the paper must increase: more copy editors, more photographers, more artists, etc. If you do not increase your resources the system is doomed to fail before it ever gets going."

Both newsrooms instituted a newspaper redesign at the same time the team system was introduced, and many respondents were careful to point out that some of their judgments were probably due to the production and design change demands more than to the team system. One person wrote, "Page designers are running amok (they haven't a clue about style)." Another wrote, "There is far more attention to graphics and design, so that words are sometimes sacrificed to visual appeal." Another said, "To me, the newspaper *looks* good, but it's less useful, less meaningful and more difficult to work at."

News Process Findings. Journalists judge that the team process has negatively affected the process of producing the newspaper on a day-to-day basis. Table One summarizes the responses on questions that asked about the effects of teams on the news process.

TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE

Ten times as many respondents said that under the team system the production time needed to put the paper together has increased compared to those who said it has decreased. Similar discrepancies exist between those who think the night and weekend supervision of the news process has decreased and those who say it has increased. This problem with story "hand-off" was reiterated in written comments. One person wrote,

> The team system produces pretty much the same old nightmares for the night production team with some new nightmares added--stories sitting in far-flung team queues after teams have left for the day, lack of clear lines of responsibility for some issues, and the mythical notion that reporters can fill in for copy editors who are sick, on vacation or on leave, for instance. I believe a team system might be fine in a business where everybody works M-F, 9-5. I do not believe it works in a 7-day operation where major shifts stretch from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m.--it is *not possible* to build team cohesion when team members aren't even in the building at the same hours daily

While 43 percent of respondents said that the time needed to report a story has stayed the same, fully 27 percent said it has increased and only four percent said it decreased. Sixty-one percent of the respondents who answered "don't know" to this question are managers, lending weight to reporters' complaints in the focus groups and written comments about how managers are insensitive and unaware of how the team system has negatively affected their work routines. Four times as many respondents said the team system does not enhance their ability to meet their deadlines compared to those who said it does. Forty-five percent of respondents report that they are spending more time in meetings compared to before the team system was implemented. One person wrote, "Simple decisions that used to take 5 minutes now require hours or weeks, plus a cast of thousands, and sometimes don't get made at all." One-fourth of respondents say their unpaid overtime hours have increased.

In many other respects, the process of work has stayed the same. Respondents report that they generate their own story ideas that get into the paper about as often as under the old system; they volunteer for assignments about as frequently as before; they have the same number of shared bylines as before; and the effort needed to get a story on page 1A is about the same.

Organizational confusion appears to be an issue. About half of respondents say they don't have a clear idea about who makes final decision about their work, and about half say they don't have a clear idea about the goals and expectations for their own work. Fully 57 percent of respondents say they don't have a clear idea about the goals of team journalism. Team leaders, graphics staff and layout staff are the only groups with majorities who say they have a clear idea about the goals of team journalism. Managers are more likely to say they know who makes final decision about their work than are labor ($x^2 = 6.5$; $p < .05$). Those who don't have a clear idea about who makes decisions about their work have a lower (more negative) news process index score. ($t = -4.3$; $p < .001$).

Coordination between reporters and copy editors has improved in the judgment of 42 percent of respondents, and 48 percent of respondents say the content of the paper is better served with copy editors assigned to teams rather than working in a copy pool. Thirty-nine percent of respondents think coordination among reporters, photographers and graphic artists has improved. However, when broken out by job title, it becomes apparent that photographers think coordination is actually worse, while graphic artists think coordination is better. One photographer wrote,

> Placing photographers in teams is less efficient both in terms of quantity and quality. The loss of flexibility in terms of bodies covering the daily and weekend shifts as well as the loss of flexibility to utilize each individual's talents in a more matched way with assignments has resulted in a lower quality of the pix appearing in the paper. It's hard to bring a fresh eye to a subject when you are doing the same thing over and over and over and over. It's a nightmare for a generalist--which is what most photojournalists are both by temperament and training.

A key finding is that fifty-three percent of respondents say they have less authority under the team system than they did before. Most labor respondents say they have lost authority, while most managers say they've gained it ($x^2 = 6.7$; $p < .01$). Generally, those who used to be able to work independently, without a lot of oversight and intervention, say they have lost authority. They can't just go off and "do their own thing" anymore, and this has translated into negative judgments about the team process. One person wrote, "The team system, in theory, is supposed to empower the teams to do their own work and see it through the process but there is much meddling from above when something created and nurtured by a team becomes a 'big deal.'...The elaborate processes we now have to go through to get something into the newspaper sometimes results in delaying stories and takes away our sense of immediacy." Another wrote, "Teams still do not control their budgets, their hiring, even the configuration of their own beats." Another wrote, "The newsroom is more hierarchical. Senior editors carry a lot of clout; reporters are pretty low on the food chain."

Both newsrooms were physically redesigned as part of the move to the team system, and this has led to the perception of loss of authority in some cases. In one newsroom, many more people are crowded together than in the past. Reporters sit right next to their editors; phone conversations are easily overheard. Team members are in close proximity to one another, and people who do different types of jobs can't help but observe what their colleagues are doing on a minute-by-minute basis.

The team system seems to have exposed more of the news process to a wider group of people than was the case in the past. People who used to be able to focus on their own area and not really pay attention to the rest of the process can't do so anymore. This may feed the "relative deprivation" idea. Focus group and written comments made it clear that people feel they have to police their less-productive colleagues; it is harder to get someone to help in a crunch because no one wants to have something permanently assigned as "their" job if they do it once.

Staff in both newsrooms reported that there have been days when the paper came close to running white space because of the dearth of copy. One section editor likened the process of filling her section to "churning the ice cream crank;" others talked about having to walk around the newsroom with a rhetorical whip to try to get enough copy to fill the paper. Relative deprivation sets in when workers perceive that others who are less able or productive are being rewarded the same as or better than everyone else. Under the team system, there are many more opportunities for workers to make comparisons and judgments about their relative contributions to the overall process of putting out a newspaper. One person wrote, "There is no place in the team system to flog the guilty. We are all supposed to be *nice* to each other but when someone puts a bad headline on my story, I want the right to yell at them."

The overall findings about the effects of the team system on the news process lend support to Hypothesis H_1.

Quality findings. Fifty-four percent of respondents think that for the reading public, the quality of news produced under the team system has declined; only 21 percent think it has improved. This judgment is buttressed by the responses on questions regarding errors, coverage of breaking news and beat stories, and stories missed. Table Two summarizes responses about quality judgments.

TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

Respondents say the newspaper now has more substantive errors (fact, information), and more mechanical errors (grammar, spelling). Respondents say the newspaper's coverage of breaking news is worse, but that the packaging of stories has improved. Most respondents say the team system has not helped the newspaper produce stories that would have been missed under the old system, but the newspaper *is* missing stories that would have been covered before. Respondents who say they have lost authority are more likely to have a lower (more negative) news quality index score. ($t = -6.8$; $p < .001$) Respondents' news quality index and news process index scores are significantly correlated. ($r = .430$; $p < .01$)

Generally, respondents say their own work quality has stayed the same (53 percent), while 29 percent say their own work quality has improved. Respondents report that they spend the same amount of time on background research as before; the number and variety of sources they use in their stories is the same. Thirty-one percent say the number of trend/idea stories they work on has increased, and 26 percent say their use of library/database resources has increased. Those who say the quality of the newspaper is better are more likely to say their own work quality is also up. Those who say the newspaper quality is worse are more likely to say their own work quality has stayed the same.

Focus group and written comments flesh out some of the quality judgments. One copy editor wrote, "I find my work less satisfying because I have less time with more copy...quality is suffering as a result." Another person wrote, "Most of the nuts and bolts of copy editing have disintegrated under the new system...Page proofs, once scrupulously read, are now ignored because the copy desk doesn't exist." Other expressed concern about coverage. One wrote, "I think we're softer, too trendy, not enough hard news or daily stories." Another wrote, "I believe we do a much poorer job of covering breaking news at night. During the day, we cover fewer hard-news stories from beats, and we write more stories suggested by editors sitting in a 9:30 a.m. meeting. In those meetings, the freedom editors feel to suggest stories is inversely proportional to the responsibility those editors have for actually getting the stories reported and written." Yet another wrote, "Our coverage lacks consistency. Feature stories and columns land on the front page while news is buried. We simply miss breaking stories because there's no one in charge to point out errors and there is pressure at meetings to simply be agreeable!"

The overall findings about the effects of the team system on news quality lend support to Hypothesis H_2.

Discussion

Previous research has determined that one of the most important factors in journalists' perceptions about their work is whether the quality of the newspaper is good. The dominant perception among the journalists at these two newspapers is that journalistic quality has suffered. It is therefore not surprising that newsroom teams are viewed negatively. Whether it is or isn't fair to make the sort of cause-and-effect judgments that these journalists have made, there is a clear concern about the slipping quality of the newspaper, and many have blamed it on the switch to teams.

Organizational confusion has contributed to the negative assessment of newsroom teams. Many people say they don't know what they are supposed to be doing anymore. Previous research has emphasized the importance of clear communication in successfully managing newsroom personnel. While many respondents in this study report that they are communicating more often with team members who do a different job from theirs than in the past, there is still a great deal of confusion about who makes final decisions on individuals' work, and about the goals and expectations for individuals' work and for team journalism. Cook and Banks found that journalists need unambiguous job descriptions and specific job assignments. These two job characteristics appear to be conspicuously absent in the judgments of many of the journalists in these two newsrooms.

In addition to confusion about what they are supposed to be doing, many journalists in this study say they have lost authority in their jobs. Polansky and Hughes found a relationship between authority and autonomy, and found that people have to have autonomy in order to be innovative. Managers at these two newspapers are asking people to be innovative in an atmosphere that has taken away their authority to control their own work. Managers feel they have gained authority, while labor feels they have lost it. This is counter to the rhetoric about the "empowering" benefits of the newsroom team system. Written comments expanded on the feeling of top-down power flow, and this gap between rhetoric and reality has fostered a sense of cynicism about the motives and goals of the managers who instituted the team system. One person wrote,

> From the beginning, leaders paid much lip service to "empowerment" of news staff while holding on to most of their power. The trend in recent months has been to gather ever more power to themselves, to make decisions without any concern for the opinions of the people who do the work...I find I often have greater responsibility than before and, at the same time, less authority.

As the news process has become more exposed, people find more to dislike about how their colleagues do their work. The lack of communication in the newsroom from managers about what the goals for team journalism are has further complicated the implementation of the team system. Workers are forced to interact with each other much more than in the past, but without knowing why. This may be leading to the "relative deprivation" phenomenon, in which workers become disillusioned when they compare their own activities and rewards to those of others.

Both papers have made a heavy commitment to a marketing orientation. Stamm and Underwood found that as newspapers implement more of a marketing orientation, journalists have a worse perception of their work. Many journalists in this study perceived the implementation of the team system as a ploy to get them to bend to management's wishes on the marketing orientation for the paper. Focus group and written comments from staff at one paper suggested that managers wanted more control over what individual journalists were working on day-to-day in order to be sure that reader desires in content and coverage were being met, and that the team system allowed for that kind of control. One person wrote, "Moving to teams allowed the editors to do what managers routinely do, which is reward and promote the people they have hired or feel kinship with, and to facilitate a shift toward a softer magazine-style type of journalism."

Ironically, many of the marketing decisions managers are making, such as the increase in interpretive and trend stories, and the focus on the visual design of the newspaper, are not items highly rated by readers when judging newspaper quality, according to Gladney and Bogart. And the move away from deep local coverage of meetings and events is potentially off-putting to readers as well, according to the same research. In other words, the marketing orientation of the newspapers is making journalists unhappy but may not be pleasing readers either. Thus, it is counterproductive in two ways.

We should not make the mistake of appearing to conclude that journalists' assessments of the team system are uniformly and overwhelmingly negative. In fact, some respondents thought the team system had improved the quality of the newspaper, had improved their own work quality, had given them more authority and responsibility, and had made them happier in their work than they had been in years. One person wrote, "My job as a news editor has been made better under the new system because designers have taken over the page design function, allowing me to focus on content and news judgment." Another wrote, "Teams are terrific. They allow for increased communication and improvement of the story *before* the reporter types, files and goes home at 5." A team leader wrote, "Our team has produced some packages that have been excellent examples of how all the partners working together (reporters, photographers, graphic designers, copy editors) can really make a difference. We work together well; not all teams have all the partners they need working the hours they should and they simply aren't doing/can't do the job as well as it needs to be done."

Despite the positive comments from some respondents, the overall impression from this case study is that the newsroom team system has had negative effects on the quality of newspaper journalism and on the efficiency and effectiveness of the routines and processes of producing the newspaper. More effective communication among the groups involved in implementing the team system might have eliminated some of the problems, but there may still be some underlying characteristics of the team system as it applies to creative and professional workers that make it an inappropriate model for adoption.

Future reports about this research will examine some of the power and empowerment issues raised by these respondents. We will also explore the findings about communication in the newsroom, responsibility and accountability issues and the politics of newsroom staffing. This is the first of a series of reports that will flesh out our understanding of the effects of the newsroom team system in these two case study newspapers. For now it is possible to conclude that the effects on the news process and on news quality have been mixed, but predominantly negative, in the assessment of these journalists.

Table One
Effects of Teams on the News Process
N = 244

	Yes	**No**	**No change**	**na**
Teams enhance ability to meet deadline	11 %	44 %	37 %	8 %
Clear who makes final decisions	53	47		
Know goals for own work	52	48		
Know goals of team journalism	43	57		
	More	**Less**	**Same**	**na**
Time in mtgs. now	45	13	42	
Hours of unpaid overtime	25	5	44	26
No. of people your work passes through hands of	22	33	36	9
	Increased	**Decreased**	**Same**	**Don't Know**
Night supervision of news process	3	57	10	31
Weekend supervision of process	4	41	18	38
Production time needed	48	5	15	33
Time to report a story	27	4	43	25
	Improved	**Declined**	**Same**	**Don't Know**
Coordination between reporters & copy editors	42	17	25	16
Coordination between reporters, photogs & graphic artists	39	24	24	12
	Teams	**Copy Pool**		**Don't Know**
Content of paper is better with copy editors in	48	29		24

Table Two
Effects of Teams on News Quality
N = 244

	Improved	**Declined**	**Same**	**Don't Know**
Quality of news for reading public	21 %	54 %	16 %	9 %
Quality of own work	29	18	53	
	Yes	**No**		**Don't Know**
More substantive errors	54	13		33
More mechanical errors	62	10		28
Covering stories that were missed before	19	46		35
Missing stories that were covered before	62	9		29
	Better	**Worse**	**Same**	**Don't Know**
Response to breaking news	7	63	20	10
Packaging of stories	53	17	22	8
	Increased	**Decreased**	**Same**	**na**
No. of trend/idea stories	31	16	36	17
No. of "beat" stories	17	21	40	22
Time on bckgrnd. research	16	17	44	22
Use of library/databases	26	9	48	17
No. of sources in stories	14	9	49	27
Variety of sources	17	10	49	25

Endnotes

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NET GAIN?

NEW ENGLAND'S ONLINE NEWSPAPERS ASSESS BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF THEIR ELECTRONIC EDITIONS

PRESENTED AUGUST 2, 1997
80TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION
NEWSPAPER DIVISION
HYATT REGENCY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines New England newspapers' assessment of the benefits, drawbacks and future of electronic publishing. Conclusions are based on a survey of the region's 602 daily and weekly newspapers, conducted from November 1996-February 1997.

Newspapers responded to open-ended questions on the pluses and minuses of cybereditions. The survey found that most of the benefits cited were related not to producing a better journalistic product, but to business considerations. In addition, many of the aspects of online publishing that have been lauded as revolutionary -- including the ability to deliver the news instantly, without regard to space limitations -- are the same elements cited as drawbacks by some online publishers.

As for the future? Although most respondents said computer-delivered news would never replace the traditional newspaper, 13 papers (6.5 percent) surveyed say the Internet -- or some as-yet unimagined technology -- would eventually replace the print medium; four more (2 percent) said its demise was possible.

Next month marks the fourth anniversary of New England's first electronic newspaper. Since September 1993, more than 70 New England newspapers[1] -- ranging from **The Boston Globe** to New Hampshire's 1,672-circulation weekly **Franklin-Tilton Telegram** -- have established online editions: paperless newspapers, available to readers with access to personal computers and a modem.

New England's move online is part of a global trend. Earlier this month, **Editor & Publisher** listed 1,786 online newspapers worldwide, 999 of them in the United States[2], more than twice as many as 18 months earlier.[3]

In New England, small newspapers dominate online and off. Of the region's 90 print dailies, only six have circulations greater than 100,000. Just five of the 67 U.S. dailies with circulations between 100,000 and 250,000 are based in New England.[4] Only one -- **The Boston Globe** -- is among the 40 U.S. dailies with circulations of more than 250,000.[5]

This concentration of community-based newspapers makes New England, the birthplace of the American media, a key region for exploring how cyberspace is affecting the weekly newspaper, America's oldest news medium.

METHODOLOGY

This paper gives an overview of New England newspapers' move online, and summarizes their assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of publishing on the Internet.

Conclusions are drawn from a mail survey of the 602 daily and weekly newspapers listed in the New England Press Association's 1996-97 newspaper directory. The survey was conducted by traditional mail rather than electronic mail in hopes of soliciting responses from the broadest range of newspapers, including those not technologically savvy.

The 20-question survey was developed after consultation with editors and publishers on the NEPA board of directors. It was amended several times, aided by their suggestions on question wording and sequence.

The first surveys were mailed in mid-November 1996, accompanied by a cover letter from NEPA President Ross Connelly and by a reply envelope. A reminder postcard was mailed two weeks later, followed by a hand-addressed second mailing of the survey with a business-reply return envelope.

Editors and/or publishers of each NEPA-listed newspaper that published at least weekly were asked to complete the survey or to forward it to the staff member most qualified to answer questions about online issues.

Conclusions for this paper are based on responses to open-ended questions on the pluses and minuses of their fledgling electronic editions; online newspapers' effect on community coverage; and journalists' predictions on the future of the newspaper industry. Questions were phrased as follows:

- How has your paper benefitted from being online? Please be specific.
- Are there drawbacks to publishing your newspaper online? Please be specific.
- Do you think electronic publishing -- or some as-yet unimagined technology -- will eventually replace the traditional newspaper in your community?

Responses below are attributed to newspapers rather than to the individuals who completed the surveys, as the research attempted to identify the policy of the newspaper as an institution.

RESPONSE RATE

This report is based on 210 responses (32 from Connecticut newspapers, 76 from Massachusetts, 37 from Maine, 29 from New Hampshire, 9 from Rhode Island and 27 from Vermont) from 39 dailies and 171 weeklies received by February 15, 1997.

The 210 newspapers responding have a combined circulation of 3.87 million; 2.31 million for dailies and 1.56 million for weeklies. [6]

Of New England's 602 dailies and weeklies, 232 are listed as independent newspapers and 370 are affiliated with newspaper groups. [7] Members of groups that have one policy for its member publications were advised they could complete one survey for the entire group. Assuming a single response is representative of the group -- given the tendency of chains to centralize the formulation of corporate mission statements, policies and rules -- the survey's response rate is as follows:

TABLE 1

BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS, ADJUSTED

Description	**Responses**	**No responses**	**Total**
Independents	116	116	232
Percentages	50.0%	50.0%	100%
Group totals	344	25	370
Percentages	93.0%	7.0%	100%
GRAND TOTALS	**460**	142	602
PERCENTAGES	**76.4%**	23.6%	100%

Of those responding, 94 (44.8 percent) are members of newspaper groups; 116 (55.2 percent) are independent. Thirty-nine of the respondents are daily newspapers (18.6 percent of the total respondents; 43.3 percent of New England's 90 dailies); 171 are weeklies.

The raw, unadjusted response data is as follows:

TABLE 2

BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS, UNADJUSTED

Description	**Responses**	**No responses**	**Total**
Independents	116	116	232
Percentages	50.0%	50.0%	100%
Group totals	94	276	370
Percentages	25.4%	74.6%	100%
GRAND TOTALS	**210**	392	602
PERCENTAGES	**34.9%**	65.1%	100%

WHO'S ONLINE

Of the 70 New England newspapers operating electronic editions in early 1997, 64 responded to this survey. Of those, 22 dailies and 42 weeklies had established an online edition as of March 1997. Another 24 newspapers planned to establish an electronic extension of their print product by year's end, and an additional 15 said they are considering it.

Small community newspapers have been in the vanguard of New England's rush online. The region's first electronic publication was established in September 1993 by the **Middlesex News**, a 33,992-circulation daily based in Framingham, Mass., on suburban Boston's Route 128 high-tech corridor.[8]

The next New England newspapers went online in 1994. Three free weeklies led the way: New Hampshire's **Hollis/Brookline Journal** went online in January 1994; Boston's 20,033-circulation **Bay Windows** in July and the 49,973-circulation **Fairfield (Conn.) County Weekly** in November. The second New England daily with an online edition was **The Standard-Times** of New Bedford, Mass., a 42,226-circulation Ottaway paper, in May 1995.

The following table breaks down when survey respondents reported establishing an online edition:

TABLE 3

RESPONDENTS' TIMETABLE OF INTRODUCTION OF NEW ENGLAND ONLINE NEWSPAPERS
January 1994-March 1997

January	1994	1
July	1994	1
November	1994	1
1994 total		**3**
March	1995	1
May	1995	2
June	1995	1
August	1995	1
September	1995	2
October	1995	1
November	1995	3
1995 total		**11**
January	1996	1
February	1996	2
March	1996	2
April	1996	8
May	1996	2
June	1996	4
July	1996	3
August	1996	1
September	1996	1
October	1996	6
November	1996	6
December	1996	5
1996 total		**41**

January	1997	3
February	1997	4
March	1997	2
1st quarter of 1997		**9**

Why Some Newspapers Are Staying Offline

Although 64 responding newspapers had established online editions (and 39 said they might in the near future), another 75 (34.9 percent of the papers who responded) said they had no plans to go online (a total of 18 publications, or 8.4 percent, did not respond to the question).

When asked to detail why they had decided against establishing an online edition, newspapers most frequently cited the following factors:

• No demand from readers	(45.7% of weeklies; 54.5% of dailies)
• No way to make a profit	(45.7% of weeklies; 54.5% of dailies)
• Not enough time	(42.9% of weeklies; 54.5% of dailies)
• Not enough staff	(40.0% of weeklies; 54.5% of dailies)
• No expertise	(32.9% of weeklies; 36.4% of dailies)
• Too expensive	(25.7% of weeklies; 9.1% of dailies)
• Advertisers not interested	(18.6% of weeklies; 27.3% of dailies)
• No idea where to begin	(14.3% of weeklies; 9.1% of dailies)
• Fear sales of paper may suffer	(5.7% of weeklies; 9.1 % of dailies)

Daily newspapers cited the same top five reasons as weeklies for staying off line. As noted in the breakdown above, however, more weeklies than dailies were worried about the cost of going online. Dailies were more concerned that being available online would cut into the number of paying subscribers and not produce additional advertising revenue.

BENEFITS OF ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

Electronic newspapers responded to the question "How has your paper benefitted from being online?" with answers that can be grouped in five categories. They lauded interactive newspapers as:

- encouraging journalistic innovation by avoiding the space, deadline and print limitations of the traditional newspaper;
- being part of a savvy business strategy to allow the newspaper to evolve and thrive into the next century;
- attracting -- and even developing -- new readers;
- expanding services for readers and increasing the newspaper's ability to respond to their concerns; and
- elevating the newspaper's image by using the new medium to demonstrate cutting-edge technology and build links in the community.

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JOURNALISTIC INNOVATION

Using new technologies to change the style and substance of newspaper news was cited as a benefit by only a few electronic publications. **The Boston Globe** listed its online edition's "ability to offer breaking news" around the clock as the top benefit of being wired. **The Newtown (Conn.) Bee**, a 6,894-circulation weekly, said:

> "The Internet has given a new, more immediate format to provide news and information to our readers. . . . It also allows a weekly to compete on election results and snow cancellations with dailies and even radio. A growing number of readers appreciate having online access."

Another weekly, the 10,829-circulation **Marblehead (Mass.) Reporter**, boasted that its outlook toward deadlines had changed since it established an online edition in October 1996. "We publish breaking news and even routine news on the Web before anyone else, daily or weekly."

Three other newspapers praised the journalistic possibilities of the new technology. The **Vermont Catholic Tribune**, a 20,700-circulation paid weekly, listed advanced presentation of text, art and graphics as a benefit of publishing online. Another Vermont weekly, the **Rutland Tribune**, said its online edition "has established news contacts around the country." And **Boston Bay Windows** -- a 20,033-circulation weekly that was one of the region's first online publications -- said it gets "many news tips from the Internet."

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SMART BUSINESS

Business considerations were the most common benefit of online publishing cited by survey respondents.

The Boston Globe said its electronic version had "extended [its] brand name online" to 10 million readers each week, more than double the paid circulation of its hard-copy newspaper (498,853 daily, 793,672 Sundays).

The **Connecticut Post**, a 76,521-circulation daily based in Bridgeport, said "the WWW presence continues as a marketing tool as much as, if not more than, an information-dispersal tool." Its online edition "increased visibility in a new media outlet. Helped promote company as both a marketing and communication entity in a new way."

Smaller publications also recognized the importance of staying on top of the new technology. The biggest benefit for **The Landmark**, a 7,909-circulation weekly out of Holden, Mass., is "for now, public awareness that we're in the game."

The **Rocky Hill Post**, a 1,631-circulation Connecticut weekly agreed. It said the main benefit of having an electronic presence is "reaching and impressing readers with our online services (for what it's worth)."

Connecticut's **Fairfield County Weekly**, one of New England's largest weeklies with a circulation of 49,973, said its online edition had helped cut newsprint costs and "increased the talent base within the company."

Wooing new advertisers and offering new possibilities to old advertisers were frequently cited benefits of publishing in cyberspace.

"We're already selling advertising there although it's so new it's impossible to quantify accurately," said **The Cape Cod Times**, a 51,846-circulation daily.

The Franklin Tilton (N.H.) Telegram, a 1,672-circulation weekly, said the Internet was leveling the playing field for smaller publications:

> "We are able to offer advertisers a worldwide market with the cost built into their regular ad rates. All ads automatically go onto the Internet. Helps overcome the problem of being a small community newspaper competing with media giants."

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ATTRACTING READERS

The online boom comes at a time when newspapers are increasingly worried about losing readers.[9] Industry fears are grounded in fact. Between 1985 and 1995, Newspaper Association of America figures show that circulation at traditional daily newspapers fell by 3.7 million, from 62.7 million to 59 million.[10]

In addition to drawing new advertisers, online publishers said their new versions helped attract -- and even create -- new customers.

"We are *developing* new readers -- ones who are more interested in being tied into computer-links than to traditional papers," said The **New Haven (Conn.) Register**, a 100,089-circulation daily.

Vermont's largest newspaper, the Gannett-owned **Burlington Free Press**, said its new online offering would be targeted to a readership more specific than that for its print product. "We don't plan an online paper, but a highly specialized site dealing with in-depth information on area communities. The people using the site are different than daily readers."

Wolfeboro, N.H.'s **The Granite State News**, a 4,976-circulation weekly, also said its online version does not undermine its print publication. There's a "different audience for the Internet...We've generated some subscriptions."

Another frequently cited benefit of the new technology is the ability of newspapers to extend their reach. **The Hartford Courant**, circulation 227,792, said the Web had given it "new out-of-state readership, increased audience."

The Ridgefield (Conn.) Press said its online edition "gained us new readers, introduced to us before moving here by finding our site."

The Provincetown (R.I.) Banner, a 4,000-circulation weekly, credited the Web with allowing it to "reach non-subscribers out of town."

Online publishing has "given us a much broader reach," said **The Salem (Mass.) Evening News**, a 37,942-circulation daily. "Many e-mails of appreciation from people living out of state."

Its electronic version has "generated comments and attention from around the globe," said **The Chronicle**, a 10,153-circulation daily based in Willimantic, Conn.

O Jornal, a 17,300-circulation Portuguese weekly based in Fall River, Mass., also appreciates the international aspects of publishing online. "The Internet...gives us more exposure and takes us to other Portuguese communities around the world."

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KEEPING READERS

Responding newspapers said keeping current readers happy was at least as important as attracting new readers. Interactive publishing was credited with expanding services available to readers, such as archived articles and hypertext links, and with encouraging reader feedback and access.

The **Deerfield Valley (Vt.) News**, a 3,100-circulation paid weekly, said its online edition "offered additional service and market to readers." **The Downeast (Maine) Coastal Press**, a 3,180-circulation weekly, said "subscribers like its ease of renewing or subscribing."

Two weeklies with circulation under 8,000 -- **The Observer** of Smithfield, R.I., and the **Bar Harbor (Maine) Times** -- said a key benefit to online publishing was allowing readers instant access without the hassles of printing and delivery.

The **Worcester (Mass.) Telegram & Gazette**, an 111,836-circulation daily, said online publishing had established better contact with readers. The **York County (Maine) Coast Star**, a 12,007-circulation weekly, noted that "more readers [are] sending letters to the editor and press releases."

PRESTIGE

An ambivalence toward online publishing was apparent in many responses. Some said the only thing worse than being online was, perhaps, not being there.

Many stressed the importance of enhancing their image by being involved -- and even leading the way -- with 21st century technology. "Online presence increases our visibility in the community, adding to our quotient of marketability," said the **Connecticut Post**.

"It's early," said **The Providence Journal-Bulletin**. "But how could one afford not to be on the web. It could be the future. We want to be there."

The Quincy (Mass.) Patriot Ledger said it is "protecting turf" by establishing an electronic edition. The **Fairfield (Conn.) County Weekly**, one of the first New England newspapers in cyberspace, said it made the leap to "keep up with the competition."

The **Worcester (Mass.) Telegram & Gazette**, an 111,836-circulation daily that reports 100,000 hits a week online, cites "higher visibility" as a key benefit to being on the Web.

The **Eagle Times** of Claremont, N.H., an 8,932-circulation daily, praised the "public relations aspect" of its electronic newspaper. **The Chelsea (Mass.) Record**, a 2,901-circulation weekly, said it had benefitted "only from an image view -- the paper's market area is a high-income population."

Others said they were using the new technology as a platform for community building. Efforts ranged from **The Burlington Free Press** using the Internet to hold chat rooms on local news issues to **The Quincy Patriot-Ledger** enabling "snowbirds [to] stay in touch with home."

The **Danbury News-Times**, a 37,371-circulation daily, has been more ambitious. It has used the new electronic links to create:

> "joint efforts with other Connecticut papers. Hosting web pages has added new revenue source. Partnership with city, West Connecticut State University, Chamber of Commerce, hospital, public schools, public library to form a 'community net,' linked to common web site."

Another Connecticut paper, the **Ridgefield Press**, said its online offering allows readers "round-the-clock access to hundreds of pages of info on the community; [engendering] goodwill. Allowed us to be first to establish a local database of information; foot in the door."

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DRAWBACKS

Electronic newspapers responded to the question "Are there drawbacks to publishing online?" with answers that can be grouped in five categories. The downside of establishing and maintaining a cyberedition includes:

- Learning how to do it while continuing to put out a traditional newspaper;
- Cost of staff, training, equipment;
- Lack of staff, training, time, energy;
- Limited payback in terms of readers and revenue potential; and
- Fear that the technology could impersonalize relationship with community or provide information on community members to potential criminals.

STRIKING A BALANCE

One of the most difficult aspects of publishing online is learning how to launch the venture while continuing to put out a traditional newspaper.

The **Salem (Mass.) Evening News** said it struggled "trying to find a balance between new content for web and repackaging newspaper content."

"As a morning publication, we became our own competition since we 'hit the street' at the same time," said the **Connecticut Post**. "Therefore, we have had to review and revamp the direction of our online product as our market changed and as online-user profiles changed."

The Capital Weekly of Augusta, Maine, put the disadvantages of online publishing more succinctly: "It's kind of a hassle. It's just another element to deal with."

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COST

The cost of establishing and maintaining an online newspaper was the most common drawback mentioned by respondents.

"Until our online paper produces ad revenue, its cost will come at the expense of the rest of the newspaper," said the **New Haven Register**.

The **Rutland (Vt.) Tribune** said its online edition is "not a profit-making venture. Doubt it ever will be."

Many newspapers are wary that an online edition available free of charge to readers with Internet access will reduce the number of people willing to pay for a newspaper.

"Many of our subscribers are at a great distance and might find an online paper adequate and stop subscribing," said the **Vineyard Gazette** of Edgartown, Mass., a 13,582-circulation weekly with what it calls a "limited Internet edition."

Other financial concerns cited include: "Cost of resources," **The Hartford Courant**; "Cost of staffing,"**(Lynn, Mass.) Daily Evening Item**; "Lack of capital," **Milton (Mass.) Times**, 2,000-circulation weekly; "equipment cost, online design and transfer cost,"**The Hardwick (Vt.) Gazette**, which has no plans to go online

Coupled with worries about cost is a pessimism about attracting advertising to a Web-based publication. **The Hardwick Gazette**, a 3,017-circulation weekly, summed up the sentiments of several respondents: "How do I get online advertising -- I have enough trouble getting our salesperson to spend time to get ROP advertising. How do I keep online advertising?"

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LACK OF STAFF, TRAINING, TIME, ENERGY

Summoning the needed staff, setting aside time and arranging for training needed to put out an online edition were frequently cited negative aspects of electronic publishing.

The **Providence (R.I.) Visitor**, a 30,676-circulation weekly that plans to go online this year, said one of the most difficult aspects of its new venture is "just freeing up personnel."

The Sentinel & Enterprise, a 20,125-circulation daily based in Fitchburg-Leominster, Mass., bemoaned the "lack of staff, tech, training."

The Franklin Tilton (N.H.) Telegram -- with a paid weekly circulation of 1,672 -- is New England's smallest newspaper to have an online edition. It said the biggest drawback to establishing a cyberpaper was "having to learn new techniques."

Another weekly, the **York County (Maine) Coast Star**, said the biggest drawback of its online edition is "it's time consuming. It's only really a shadow of our main paper."

The (Claremont, N.H.) Eagle Times, an 8,932-circulation daily, said the biggest drawback of its online editions was "the time it takes to collect materials for scanning." The weekly **Greenwich (Conn.) Post** cited "time and money" as downsides to publishing online.

The Coastal Journal of Bath, Maine, an 8,400-circulation weekly, said the worst thing about its electronic edition was the "extra work involved in maintaining it." One of New England's cyberspace pioneers, Boston's 20,033-circulation gay-interest weekly **Bay Windows**, also said being online was "too much extra work."

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WHY BOTHER?

The **Chelsea (Mass.) Record**, a 2,901-circulation weekly, has been online since February 1996. It said its Web venture has produced a "limited payback."

The **Daily Evening Item** of Lynn, Mass., said there was "no apparent raison d'etre" for an electronic edition.

The **Advertiser-Democrat** of Norway, Maine agrees. The 6,250-circulation weekly has no plans to leap into cyberspace. "We are a community newspaper. As far as [I] can determine, there are fewer than 500 offices and homes in our coverage area that use the Internet. We have no local provider."

The **Manchester (Mass.) Cricket**, a 2,560-circulation weekly also found no motivation to join the rush online: "We are a small, one-town, local-news-only paper."

The Vineyard Gazette, the Martha's Vineyard weekly, said its limited Internet edition "doesn't improve local coverage" and feared it "may impersonalize relationship with community."

Fear of another sort was mentioned by the **Canton Register**, a Massachusetts weekly: exposing community members to unwanted attention from far-flung unsavory elements. "See New York Times Nov. 18, 1996, re prisoner developing database from weeklies to produce list of children," noted the publication, which has a circulation of 705 and no plans for an online edition. "Inmate is serving time for pedophilia."

DUBIOUS DRAWBACKS

Many of the aspects of online publishing that are lauded as revolutionizing the print media -- the ability to provide immediate updates, deliver the news instantly and without regard to space limitations -- are the same elements that are cited as drawbacks by some publishers of online newspapers.

Rather than taking advantage of the capabilities of the Web, the **Bar Harbor (Maine) Times**, a 7,505-circulation weekly, said "We leave lag time to prevent harm to newsstand sales."

The **Danbury (Conn.) News-Times**, a Connecticut daily with a circulation of 37,371, withholds information from its online readers. Its rationale:

> "Too much newspaper content online may cost you a subscription. Put a set number of local stories/photos online or write abbreviated versions or 'nuggets' of the stories for the Internet."

"We don't put the whole paper online. Just most news stories," said **The Landmark**, of Holden, Mass., a 7,909-circulation weekly. "We have requests for our editorial page online, but haven't done that yet. Should be something held back as incentive to subscribe."

The Ellsworth (Maine) American agrees. "We do not anticipate offering our full newspaper online until there is a way to make a profit from doing so," said the 11,191-circulation weekly, which plans to unveil its online edition this year. "Why give our week's work away?"

The fact that "there are no deadlines on the net" was cited as a drawback by **The Chronicle** of Willimantic, Conn., because of the effort required from the newspaper staff to meet readers' raised expectations. "While our paper hits the streets around noon, people are checking our website all day long. (The site is updated between noon and 2 p.m.)"

The **Darien News-Review,** a Connecticut weekly with a circulation of 6,849, agreed with **The Chronicle**. It said the biggest drawback of having an online editions was "readers expect it updated on certain dates and certain times."

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THE FUTURE

Electronic newspapers may complement but will never replace the traditional newspaper, according to 80 percent of the daily newspapers and 63 percent of the weeklies surveyed. (Among respondents, 15.4 percent of dailies and 28.1 percent of weeklies did not answer the question.)

The response of the 75,521-circulation **Connecticut Post**, which established an online edition in April 1996, was typical:

> "People will still want something to hold and peruse at their own speed. Families will still want to cut cartoons and school lunch menus and tape them to the fridge. Further, the space and effort a newspaper can dedicate to a subject can't be replicated in as cost-efficient manner as a newspaper. Besides, we're recyclable."

The Burlington Free Press, Vermont's largest newspaper and one of two Gannett-owned papers in New England, calls online editions:

> "an essential supplement to print news, and we in print need to be critically smart about how we use our own newspapers as gateways to the Internet. Readers still need the sorting out that the newspaper provides. But we also need to expand our delivery and our timeliness to better customize our product."

The **Advertiser-Democrat** of Norway, Maine, a 6,250-circulation weekly, is confident of print media's chances. "We have survived the 'sure death' of competition from radio, TV, direct mail fliers and expansion of large daily papers putting sales and news offices in our towns."

The **Williston (Vt.) Whistle** foresees a niche for the traditional newspaper, if only because "you can't relax in an armchair with a hot chocolate and a computer." More succinctly, **The News & Sentinel** of Colebrook, N.H., put the odds of electronic delivery replacing hard-copy newspapers as: "Not a snowball's chance in hell."

Yet 13 newspapers (6.5 percent) surveyed say the Internet -- or some as-yet unimagined technology -- would eventually replace the community paper, and four more (2 percent) said its demise was possible.

A new start up, **The Weekly Journal** of East Freetown, Mass., says the "community is in somewhat of a technology vacuum. But someday -- Internet ONLY -- paper users need not apply."

"The small towns will be the last to go," predicts **The Springfield (Vt.) Reporter,** an 1,875-circulation weekly. "But the end of the printed newspaper will surely come."

CONCLUSION

The survey's findings suggest that the rate of growth of New England newspapers' expansion onto the Internet (as noted in Table 3) appears unlikely to continue. More than one-third (34.9 percent) of newspapers participating in the study insist they have no plans to go online, and a strong majority say news delivered by computer may complement but will never replace the traditional newspaper. In addition, the survey found that some newspapers that are online report as many drawbacks as benefits to the new technology. Their experience might dissuade other newspapers from establishing electronic editions.

The journalistic aspects of online publishing that have been lauded as revolutionary -- the ability to provide immediate updates, without regard to space limitations -- are the same elements cited by some as drawbacks. One newspaper's opportunity appears to be another's burden.

ENDNOTES

1) Editor & Publisher Interactive Database Directory. Updated weekly and available online: http://www.mediainfo.com/ephome/npaper/nphtm/online.htm

2) *Ibid.*

3) Hoag Levins, "Time of Change and Challenge," *Editor & Publisher*, January 4, 1997, p. 58.

4) The five New England dailies with weekday circulations between 100,001 and 250,000 are **The Hartford Courant**, 227,792; **Boston Herald**, 214,698; **The Providence Journal-Bulletin**, 184,128; the (Springfield, Mass.) **Union-News Sunday Republican**, 108,231; and **New Haven Register**, 100,089. Figures are from the **1996/97 New England Press Association Newspaper Directory** and **NAA Facts About Newspapers 1996: A Statistical Summary of the Newspaper Industry.** Newspaper Association of America. For a free copy, of the NAA brochure, call 1-800-651-4NAA and ask for product 60030.

5) *Ibid.*

6) **1996/97 New England Press Association Newspaper Directory**, *op. cit.*

7) *Ibid.*

8) The **Middlesex News** gopher is available online at: gopher://ftp.std.com/11/periodicals/Middlesex-News

9) For more on the dip in newspaper readership see, for example: Richard O'Mara, "The Flight From Newspapers," *The Quill*, March 1990, pp. 6-7; John Morton, "Growth of electronic media has made newspapers better," *Newspaper Research Journal*, Spring 1993, pp. 18-22; Howard Kurtz, **Media Circus: The Trouble With America's Newspapers** (New York: Times Books, 1993), Chapter 15.

10) Judith Sheppard, "The Stength of Weeklies," *American Journalism Review*, July/August 1996, p. 34.

Newspaper Readership Choices
of
Young Adults

by

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NEWSPAPER READERSHIP CHOICES OF YOUNG ADULTS

For more than 35 years, the "news" about newspapers and young readers has been mostly bad for the newspaper industry. Long before any competition from cable television or Nintendo, American newspaper publishers were worrying about declining readership among the young. As early as 1960, at least 20 years prior to Music Television (MTV) or the Internet, media research scholars (Clark, 1960; Schramm, 1961; Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1960) began to focus their studies on young adult readers' decreasing interest in newspaper content. The concern over a declining youth market preceded and perhaps foreshadowed today's fretting over market penetration. Even where circulation has grown or stayed stable, there is rising concern over penetration, defined as the percentage of occupied households in a geographic market that are served by a newspaper (Hale, 1992; Lacy & Simon, 1993; Stevenson, 1994). Simply put, population growth is occurring more rapidly than newspaper readership in most communities.

This study looks at trends in newspaper readership among the 18-to-34 age group and examines some of the choices young adults make when reading newspapers.

Literature Review

Traditionally, young people could be depended upon to grow up, mature and become newspaper readers (Bogart, 1989). Once America's youth graduated from high school or college, started careers, bought homes, paid taxes, married, had families, and subscribed to the local newspaper. According to Bogart, "(i)t has therefore always been true that people in the early years of adulthood read newspapers with less regularity than those in their 30s and 40s" (p. 136). Today, however, the age at which young people form attachments with newspapers appears to be moving upward.

Multiple researchers have studied circulation and population figures to conclude that overall newspaper readership in the United States has been declining since the 1960s (Lacy & Simon, 1993; Stevenson, 1994; Stone & Wetherington, 1979; Udell, 1990). Davis (1991) noted that newspaper circulation could increase by up to 16 percent during the 1990s if baby boomers bought and read newspapers at the same rate that generations before them did. A 1980 study of the 35-to-44 age group found that 66 percent read a newspaper every day. In 1990, that figure dropped to 60 percent.

The readership decline has been more pronounced among younger readers as compared to those over the age of 35 (Dellabough & Berry, 1993). The Newspaper Association of America reported (Simms, 1993) that, in 1972, nearly 50 percent of men aged 18-29 and 38 percent of women in that age bracket read a newspaper every day. In 1991, the figures were 32 percent for young men and 22 percent for young women. In his research for the Newspaper Advertising Bureau and the Newspaper Readership Project, Bogart (1989) found that from 1967 to 1987, the number of Americans over 18 who reported having read a newspaper "yesterday" declined from 76 to 65 percent, with the largest decline (20 percent) among young adults 18 to 24 years old.

Bogart (1989) also found that college students who continue to live with their parents read newspapers with greater frequency than those who go to out-of-town colleges, but that only 8 percent of those ages 18-24 were frequent newspaper readers. Another 22 percent were infrequent (or occasional) readers, whereas the majority reported that they did read the newspaper at all. Thurlow and Milo (1993) found readership among college students ages 18-25 to be even lower than Bogart had reported. The researchers found that 77 percent of college students studied had read the most recent issue of their college newspaper, but that they had not read the local daily newspaper.

College students say they are pressed for time and cite that as the reason they spend less time reading newspapers during their college years than they did in high school (Veronis 1990). Barnhurst and Wartella (1991) explored what the newspaper means to young adults, asking 164 college students to write autobiographies about their newspaper experiences. They found that 70 percent said the newspaper was a constant in their family backgrounds, and nearly half (46 percent) linked newspaper reading with maturity. However, these same students did not see their reading participation as helping them perform as citizens. In contrast, the college students said that their newspaper reading did contribute to their roles as consumers.

> Those under 35 appear to include the most transient, unsettled, alienated element of their age group. Although they respond to entertainment, many of them seem to be turned off by the news itself, including the news of their local community (Bogart, 1989, p. 88).

A survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1990) identified men and women under age 30 as being most "at risk" of not reading newspapers. Dennis (1990) noted that newspapers are seeing increases in circulation only among those over 40, who already are the age group most likely to read newspapers. Yet, some of the trends associated with "young" readers are beginning to emerge in adult readership studies. This downward trend in readership has implications for further declines in circulation.

The ratio of newspaper circulation to households dropped almost 50 percent from 1945 to 1985 (Zhu & Weaver, 1987). Generally, those who dropped newspaper subscriptions were found to be readers who were young (under 35), single, minorities, and/or less educated. Zhu and Weaver found 14 significant predictors of dropping a subscription. These include age, sex, race, marital status, residence location, information seeking, type of starting subscription, receipt of discount offer, former subscription, duration of subscription, readership and plan of future subscribing. Similarly, age was also an indicator of whether someone who drops the subscription will restart it. Older readers tend to resubscribe more often than do younger readers.

As Tan's investigation (1980) suggested, interpersonal discussion contributes to newspaper use and this relationship is recursive. If people talk about issues, they are more inclined to read about those issues in the newspaper and vice versa. The cycle could be reciprocal as well. The decline in readership has implications for newspapers' role in creating an informed citizenry (Kohut, 1990; Ward & Wackman, 1971; Wade, 1971). Kohut (1990) found that readers ages 18 to 29 may have more education than their parents and be more computer literate, but they know little about news and public affairs.

Taken together, numerous studies have painted a gloomy picture of a declining relationship between young readers and newspapers. Yet, not all reports about youth and newspaper reading have been negative. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (1988) found that reading a newspaper at least once a week is a firmly imbedded habit of young adults in this country. They looked at data provided by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a literacy assessment that involved home interviews with 3,600 young adults (ages 21 to 25) in the 48 continuous states. According to this investigation, the newspaper habit holds true across the three major racial/ethnic subgroups — Caucasian, African American and Hispanic. However, less than half of the sample reported reading newspapers daily. About 90 percent say they read newspapers at least once a week; 45 percent read newspapers daily. A total of 2 percent said they never read newspapers. Male readership was slightly higher than female readership. The study also confirmed that education is positively associated with readership.

A recent study by the Newspaper Association of America and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Albers, 1996) showed that members of the so-called "Generation X" — those ages 16 to 29 — do read newspapers. Nearly two-thirds read both weekday and Sunday newspapers every week, while another 15 percent read only Sunday newspapers.

As these studies indicate, perhaps the extent to which younger readers have abandoned newspapers has been overemphasized in recent years. Yet, readership and circulation declines are real — and newspapers to date have been unable to turn around the trend within the under-35 age group. The industry is struggling to understand younger readers and their needs.

One of the underlying concerns behind the decline in youth newspaper reading is the question of how young people view the newspaper. A number of studies have begun to explore how young readers evaluate and use newspaper content.

Looking at this dichotomy between readers and non-readers, Schweitzer (1976) explored the differences between young adults, ages 18 to 24, who read newspapers and those who do not. He found that subscribers in this age group were more likely to be married and hold professional-technical jobs than were non-subscribers.

Comparing reader content preferences over a 10-year period, Stone and Boudreau (1995) found differences between readers ages 18-34 and those 35-plus. Younger readers showed increased interest in national news, weather, sports, and classified advertisements over the decade between 1984 and 1994, while older readers ranked weather, editorials, and food advertisements higher. Interest in international news and letters to the editor declined among younger readers, while older readers showed declining interest in reports of births, obituaries, and marriages.

Atkin (1994) explored the influence of telecommunication technology on newspaper readership among students in undergraduate media courses. Atkin reported that computer-related technologies, including electronic mail and computer networks, were unrelated to newspaper readership. The study found that newspaper subscribers preferred print formats over electronic. In a study of younger, school-age children, Brooks and Kropp (1994) found that electronic newspapers could persuade children to become news consumers, but that young readers would choose an electronic newspaper over a printed one.

In an exploration of leisure reading among college students, Jeffres and Atkin (1996) assessed dimensions of interest in newspapers, magazines, and books. They explored the influence of media use, non-media leisure, and academic major on newspaper content preferences. The study discovered that overall newspaper readership was positively related to students' focus on entertainment, job/travel information, and public affairs. However, the students' preference for reading as a leisure-time activity was related only to a public affairs focus. Content preferences for newspapers and other print media were related. The researchers found no significant differences in readership among various academic majors, or by gender, though there was a slight correlation between age and the public affairs readership index, with older readers more interested in news about public affairs.

In summary, the majority of studies that have explored the newspaper reading by college students have resulted in similar findings. To varying degrees, these studies have indicated that younger readers — those under age 35 — represent a different type of newspaper consumer than do their parents. The newspaper industry has been struggling to respond to these differences.

In the past 10-15 years, the newspaper industry has made numerous attempts to attract younger readers. The industry even has made attempts to change the habits of readers by experimenting with newspaper content (Beam, 1996; Gladney, 1996: Wilson & Igawa, 1991).

In addition, the preferences of young people seem to be behind efforts to change the traditional "beat" system of news coverage. The Newspaper Research Project, a cooperative effort by American newspapers to examine downward trends in readership and circulation, advanced the idea that the news that readers (young or otherwise) are interested in lies outside traditional newsroom beats (Bogart, 1991). The project spanned the years 1977 to 1983 and was the driving force behind three main changes in U.S. newspaper content: (1) increasing the ratio of features to hard news, (2) reducing the relative balance of national and world news to local news, and, (3) reducing the number of regular standing columns and features dealing with special interests (Bogart, 1985).

In 1977, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau conducted a comprehensive survey of newspaper readership, questioning 3,048 adults about what they read and why (Bogart, 1989). The study was updated in 1987, when 2,049 adults were questioned about their newspaper readership. The advertising research found that readers under age 35 are not interested in politics and current events, but are more interested in music, records, and consumer subjects. Readers were asked to select items that they would include in newspapers tailor-made to their interests. Those 18-24 were less likely than adults 25 and older to select religion news, but they were more interested in stories about sports, entertainment, horoscopes, health, and the environment.

Aside from the Newspaper Advertising Bureau studies (Bogart 1989) and a few targeted readership studies (Jeffres & Atkin, 1996; Stone & Boudreau, 1995) there is little detailed research about what teens and young adults read when they pick up a newspaper. Or why they put it down.

Hartman (1987; 1992) measured the impact of USA Today on 18- to 35-year-old readers to determine if younger audience members used this paper differently than they use other dailies. Hartman's investigation included whether USA Today has had an effect on younger readers' use of other newspapers. Results suggest that USA Today's approach represents the best-known hope in the newspaper industry for reversing the decline in young-adult readers, and the best known way for rival editors to protect against encroachment by USA Today. However, the percentage of 18- to 35-year-olds regularly reading USA Today proved to be less than predicted. Only 25 percent of 18- to 35-year-olds spent at least 5-15 minutes reading the national newspaper on an average day.

A USA Today'-style emphasis on photographs and graphics has been shown to be effective in attracting younger readers (Smith, 1989; Wanta, 1988; Wanta & Gao, 1994; Wanta & Remy, 1995). Similarly, writing improvement increasingly is being seen as integral to maintaining and attracting readership in times of declining circulation (Cappon, 1982; Clark, 1991; Clark & Fry, 1992; The Freedom Forum, 1993; Laakaniemi, 1987, 1995; New Directions for News, 1992).

Simms (1993) suggested that the way to attract younger readers is with hard news, long a mainstay of the newspaper business, but hard news from a teen-age or twentysomething point of view. Several researchers (Campbell, 1991; Jeffres & Atkin, 1996; McAdams, 1993; Simms, 1993) indicate that young people will read a story because of the subject matter. The investigations found that young people even will "plod through" dense, difficult writing to get information they want from the story (McAdams, 1993).

A gap exists in the academic literature about young readers' use and rejection of newspapers. Specifically, academic studies are limited in regards to investigating how young readers use the newspaper — what readership choices they are making and how they feel about these choices. Specifically, this study advances two research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the newspaper reading choices of young adults in the 1990s?

Research Question 2: What changes could be made to newspaper content to make it more desirable reading for young adults?

Method

Sample

Participants in this study (N=267) were students enrolled in 100- and 200-level English courses at a medium midwestern public university. Courses that comprise the framework for this sample were selected because they could fulfill "basic studies" requirements for all majors. A basic studies course is one that is listed within the core curriculum required for all students. The researcher obtained permission from seven professors to distribute questionnaires in the eight classes during regularly scheduled class periods. The students' participation was voluntary. The goal of this sampling procedure was to reach a broad cross-section of students representing various fields of study. A total of 53 majors was represented by the sample.

Of the 267 students who participated in the study, 65 (24.34%) were male and 177 (66.29%) were female. A total of 25 participants chose not to divulge their genders. Ages ranged from 17 to 56, with a mean age of 23.6 years. This mean does not include the 32 respondents who declined to give their ages. A total of 157 participants (58.80%) said they were of the Caucasian race, 59 (22.09%) African American, 10 (3.75%) Asian, five (1.87%) African/Native American, two (.75%) Hispanic, two (.75%) Native American, and one (.37%) Arabic. Most (214) of the students were enrolled full time, whereas a few (28) were part-time students. The class rank breakdown was: freshmen, 45 (16.85%); sophomores, 15 (5.62%); juniors, 33 (12.36%); seniors, 133 (49.81%); and graduate students, 16 (5.99%).

Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed and collected by the investigator. In each of the eight classes, the researcher introduced herself to the students as a journalism professor who was conducting a study on students' use of newspapers and other media. Each questionnaire included a cover letter with the researcher's name, address, and phone number. The researcher provided pencils and was available to answer questions if anyone needed further assistance. The average time spent on the questionnaires was 20 minutes, with some individual students taking as long as an hour. Approximately six students asked to take the questionnaires home to finish. They returned the questionnaires to the researcher's mailbox within a couple of days.

Materials & Equipment

The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather young adults' self-report responses to inquiries about their newspaper use. The first two questions asked the respondents to "(p)lease write the date (as close as you can estimate) when you last read a newspaper" and "(p)lease write the name of that newspaper."

Another set of three questions queried the participants about the specific content of the newspapers they read. The first question asked the young adults to "(p)lease list the general topic of any stories/photos/other items you looked at in that newspaper." A second question asked "(w)as there anything you read or saw in that newspaper that you wanted more information about? If so, what?" The third question about newspaper content asked "(w)as there anything in the newspaper that you were looking for and did not find? If so, what?"

The third segment of questions asked the respondents to speculate about their newspaper reading. The first asked "(c)an you think of any ways in which a newspaper helps you live your life, make decisions, teach you how to do things, etc.?" The question that followed was, "(c)an you think of any ways a newspaper could help you live your life, make decisions, teach you how to do things, etc.?" The final question, which asked the participants to speculate about their newspaper reading, was, "(w)hat information (on any topic) would help you make choices and decisions in your life?"

Another question analyzed newspaper reading in the Information Age. This question asked, "(i)f you use a computer to obtain news or information, what types of news or information do you access via computer?"

Amid various demographic questions, respondents were asked whether they subscribe to newspapers, and, if so, which ones.

Results

This study demonstrates that young adults are reading newspapers. The majority of students (68.43%) participating in the study had read a newspaper within the past week (see Table 1). The most frequent response given for the last time they read a newspaper was "yesterday," which was cited by 63 of the 267 respondents. Another 25 had read a newspaper "today." Four students said it had been a year since they had read a newspaper.

Insert Table 1

The top three newspapers read by the students were metropolitan dailies (see Table 2). The Detroit News, Ann Arbor News, and Detroit Free Press garnered the highest readership, respectively. Under their Joint Operating Agreement, the two Detroit newspapers publish a combined Sunday edition. If readership totals for the Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, and their Sunday edition are combined, the Detroit metros were read by 43.93% (118) of the students. This is despite the fact that the Detroit newspapers were a year into a labor strike at the time of this study.

As shown in Table 2, USA Today was the most recent newspaper read by 3.57% (10) of the students, while another 3.21% (9) said they had read the campus newspaper most recently. A total of 58 students listed other metropolitan newspapers (including Flint Journal, Lansing State Journal, Cincinnati Enquirer) and community newspapers (Livonia Observer, Sandusky Register) as the ones they had read most recently.

Insert Table 2

Of the total respondents, 22.84% said they subscribe to a newspaper (see Table 3). As shown in Table 3, the top three newspapers subscribed to were the Ann Arbor News, Detroit News, and Detroit Free Press. A large number of subscriptions were to local, presumably "hometown" newspapers in nearby communities and other areas of the state. One student subscribed to USA Today.

Insert Table 3

Five students reported that they subscribe to electronic newspapers. However, when asked to identify those newspapers, four listed online services (America Online, Netscape, and Prodigy), while the fifth student said he/she subscribed to the "one I wanted at that time."

Participants responded to open-ended questions asking what general topic(s) of stories/photos/other items they had read/looked at in the most recent newspaper they read. When these open-ended responses were collapsed into categories (see Table 4), "news" emerged as the largest single type of story/photo/item read/seen (313 responses). Not only were hard news stories the most frequently cited, but when students listed several stories that were read, they usually listed the hard news story first. As described earlier, hard news typically includes breaking news (i.e., crime, accidents, fires), as well as stories from traditional news beats, such as government and business. Undoubtedly, students could be reading hard news first merely because it usually is presented first in the paper's layout. Still, this interest in hard news does seem to indicate that students are not skipping the newspaper's front page. A comment from one participant supported this contention. The student said the most interesting part of the paper was "the front page. I like reading about headlines and top news in my community." Another professed the most interest in "local news, because it's local."

After the category of news were stories/items that could be categorized as entertainment (208), advertising (124), sports (119), features (76), business (43), comment (13), and photos (7). Within the entertainment category, comics and general entertainment news were the most-cited types of items. However, many of the other entertainment stories read were those that provided information beyond simple diversion. For example, the students often said they turned to the entertainment section for movie listings, horoscopes, advice, TV listings, crossword puzzles, events calendars, and reviews. One student's response, "Entertainment -- because I can see what is going on for the weekend," was typical among those who said they read the entertainment section.

More than a third of the young adults participating in the study said they read the advertisements. They read the classifieds and the sale circulars. Again, this is information they can use. In several cases, it was information the respondents felt they needed. They said they read "auto sales because I'm in the market for a new car," "store advertisements because I was currently getting ready to shop for some stuff and I was looking for some deals," and "classifieds because I need a job very badly!"

Though fourth on the overall readership list, sports stories have a strong following within the category. Asked to list the topics of stories/items they had looked at, some students gave these responses: "Hockey, Olympic torch, personal ads, sports section, living section," "Olympics soccer games, editorials, business, J-leagues, any other sports," and, "Hockey, basketball, weather."

Insert Table 4

Asked whether there was anything they had read or seen in the newspaper that they wanted more information about, more than a third (37.50%) of the participants who responded to the question said they wanted more detail and/or follow-up information on news events reported (see Table 5). When citing stories/items about which they wanted further information, the young adults most often said they wanted more detail and/or follow-up information on news events. Some said they wanted to know "how to contact someone for more information" and "the entire story." One requested "more in-depth coverage of business trends and local markets, also with other sports coverage (not football, basketball, and baseball)" and another, "a better weather page." One student commented, "A lot of times I see stories of people who went in hospitals or are recovering. How are they now? How's the DeLisle family? People who go to prison you never hear about again. What happened to Timothy McVeigh?"

More information on entertainment items was sought by 23.61% of the students, while 13.89% wanted more detailed advertisements.

Insert Table 5

The respondents also were asked whether they had been looking for something in the newspaper and had not found it (see Table 6). Only 38 said they had, but, of those, 14 wanted details on events and/or follow-up information. Seven said they were looking for specific advertisements and did not find them. Some said they were seeking an advertisement or detail on an event and it wasn't there. The comments, "more information on international affairs — especially events in the Middle East," "follow-up stories on murder or major art theft crimes," and, "a breaking story on the news the previous day," were examples of responses explaining what information they sought unsuccessfully.

Insert Table 6

Describing ways a newspaper "helps you live your life, make decisions, teach(es) you how to do things, etc.," students said it informs them about issues, helps them make purchase decisions, informs them about entertainment events, and helps them make weather- and health-related decisions (see Table 7). In a similar vein, students said that a newspaper could help them live their lives primarily by giving advice/information on decisions (see Table 8). Specifically, the information that respondents said would be helpful to them includes that on health, money, political views of candidates, and other decision-filled areas of their lives (see Table 9). While seeking advice, several students suggested that newspapers need to be more balanced in their presentation of news and information, giving many viewpoints. "I suppose political information could help if I wasn't so concerned about the source of the information," one student wrote.

Insert Tables 7, 8, & 9

A total of 132 of the 267 respondents said they use a computer to access information (see Table 10). Of those, 45 said they use the computer to do research for school/work and another 24 said they use it to obtain news.

Insert Table 10

Conclusions

Both research questions — investigating what newspaper readership choices young adults are making and what changes newspapers might make to better appeal to young adults — generated interesting results. The implications of these findings are discussed here.

Amid widespread reports that college-aged adults are not forming relationships with newspapers, this study indicates that many at least are giving newspapers a chance. They are picking them up, looking at them, and, sometimes, subscribing to them. More than two-thirds of the young adults surveyed read a newspaper within the past week. Nearly a quarter read a newspaper "yesterday." One-fifth are subscribing to newspapers.

This investigation does show "yesterday" readership among college students to be down from the levels Bogart (1989) recorded in 1987. However, this study supports the 1996 findings of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which indicated that two-thirds of 16- to 29-year-olds do read newspapers.

Clearly, the news about young readers is not all negative.

In addition to looking at whether college students are reading newspapers, Research Question One opened an exploration of *what* the young adults are reading. Topping the list were major newspapers of nearby metropolitan areas. However, a sizable number of students said that community newspapers — both dailies and weeklies — were the last papers they had read. The diversity in the newspapers named by students suggests that college students remain readers of their hometown newspapers even when attending a university in another city. Very few of the respondents said the last paper they read was USA Today. This is interesting considering USA Today's purported popularity with younger readers.

Within the newspapers they read, young adults are looking first at hard news. This study was conducted during a presidential election year which saw numerous other "big" news stories, including the TWA Flight 800 crash in New York, the 1996 Olympics, the bombing in Atlanta during the Olympics, and a local Ku Klux Klan rally. Those stories were read by this college audience.

This strong interest in hard news seems to contradict Bogart's findings (1989) that readers under 35 are not interested in political news or current events. Instead, it more closely follows the Simms (1993) research indicating that young readers want hard news, but from a younger point of view.

Entertainment stories — often touted as the way to lure younger readers — placed second to news. Also, the study offered some evidence that young adults look to entertainment news to supplement their information, but not to replace hard news. "The entertainment section was interesting. Talking about new music groups, TV shows, and what they are about," one student wrote, before adding, "Also I love the nation/world section. It's really interesting to know what's going around in other parts of the world."

These rankings are consistent with those of Stone and Boudreau (1995), who found that readers 18-24 had increased interest in news, weather, sports, and advertisements over the decade between 1984 and 1994.

Perhaps one surprise in this study is that readership of advertising eclipsed that of sports. This is despite the fact that the 1996 Olympics were under way. There were a few comments about Olympic burnout, and some evidence that the Atlanta bombing had taken attention away from the Olympics' sporting events.

Sometimes, the students opened their newspapers looking for information and did not find it. The respondents wanted follow-up details on yesterday's story, or they wanted to see a certain retailer's ad, and they expected to be able to find it in their newspaper.

Two themes emerged when students were asked how a newspaper helps them live their lives — and how it *could* help them. The students indicated that they look to newspapers to inform them about issues and to help them make decisions. They said they could use some advice about health issues, money, politics, and consumer issues, for example. This lends support to the Newspaper Research Project (Bogart, 1991) contention that some of the news young readers want may lie outside traditional newspaper beats.

In summary, these responses indicate that young adult readers are turning to newspapers for news and information, though they sometimes turn away with unanswered questions. Students are looking to newspapers for information about living their lives, but they often feel they are not getting this help. This may be good news for newspapers. These trends seem to offer opportunities for newspapers to expand their role within a competitive media market by further developing their longstanding strengths as providers of news and information.

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Table 1

Last Time Read Newspaper

Day	Frequency	Percentage
Yesterday	63	23.77%
2 days ago	43	16.23%
Today	25	9.43%
3 days ago	22	8.30%
4 days ago	22	8.30%
30 days ago	14	5.28%
14 days ago	11	4.15%
5 days ago	8	3.02%
7 days ago	7	2.64%
10 days ago	6	2.26%
8 days ago	5	1.89%
9 days ago	4	1.51%
60 days ago	4	1.51%
365 days ago	4	1.51%
11 days ago	3	1.13%
12 days ago	3	1.13%
13 days ago	2	.75%
21 days ago	2	.75%
42 days ago	2	.75%
90 days ago	2	.75%
120 days ago	2	.75%

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Day	Frequency	Percentage
6 days ago	1	.38%
17 days ago	1	.38%
27 days ago	1	.38%
sometime this month	1	.38%
49 days ago	1	.38%
75 days ago	1	.38%
180 days ago	1	.38%
210 days ago	1	.38%
121 days ago	1	.38%
several months ago	1	.38%
“?”	1	.38%

Note. N=265. Two respondents did not answer.

Table 2

Last Newspaper Read

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Detroit News	62	22.14%
Ann Arbor News	61	21.79%
Detroit Free Press	49	17.50%
Ypsilanti Press (edition of Ann Arbor News)	12	4.29%
USA Today	10	3.57%
Eastern Echo	9	3.21%
Detroit News and Free Press (combined Sunday edition)	7	2.50%
Monroe Evening News	7	2.50%
Oakland Press	7	2.50%
Flint Journal	6	2.14%
Michigan Chronicle	5	1.79%
New York Times	5	1.79%
Adrian Daily Telegram	3	1.07%
Downriver News-Herald	3	1.07%
Jackson Citizen-Patriot	3	1.07%
Lansing State Journal	2	.71%
Livonia Observer	2	.71%
Wall Street Journal	2	.71%
"?"	2	.71%

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Ann Arbor Agenda	1	.36%
Ann Arbor Observer	1	.36%
Atlanta Constitution	1	.36%
Barron's	1	.36%
Brighton paper	1	.36%
Canton Observer	1	.36%
Cincinnati Enquirer	1	.36%
Dearborn Times Herald	1	.36%
Detroit Observer	1	.36%
Detroit Sunday Journal	1	.36%
Grand Rapids Press	1	.36%
Grosse Pointe News	1	.36%
Holland Sentinel	1	.36%
Iowa Register	1	.36%
Islam	1	.36%
Milford Times	1	.36%
Plymouth Observer	1	.36%
Sandusky Register	1	.36%
Southfield Eccentric	1	.36%
St. Louis Times	1	.36%
Toledo Blade	1	.36%

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Yomiuri, Sankei	1	.35%
"Local paper"	1	.35%

Note. A total of 267 respondents listed 280 answers as to what newspapers they last read. Percentages are frequency of responses divided by total responses.

Table 3

Newspaper Subscriptions

Newspaper	Frequency	% n=61	% N=267
Ann Arbor News	15	24.59%	5.62%
Detroit News	14	22.95%	5.24%
Detroit Free Press	12	19.67%	4.49%
Detroit News and Free Press (combined Sunday edition)	3	4.92%	1.07%
Monroe Evening News	3	4.92%	1.07%
Adrian Daily Telegram	1	1.64%	.37%
Cosmo	1	1.64%	.37%
Dearborn Press and Guide	1	1.64%	.37%
Farmington Observer	1	1.64%	.37%
Flint Journal	1	1.64%	.37%
Jackson Citizen-Patriot	1	1.64%	.37%
Lansing State Journal	1	1.64%	.37%
Milford Times	1	1.64%	.37%
Toledo Blade	1	1.64%	.37%
USA Today	1	1.64%	.37%
World News	1	1.64%	.37%
Yomiuri, Sankei	1	1.64%	.37%
Ypsilanti Press (edition of Ann Arbor News)	1	1.64%	.37%

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Newspaper	Frequency	% n=61	% N=267
"Local paper"	1	1.64%	.37%
None	104		38.95%

Note. A total of 61 of the 267 participants said they subscribe to newspapers. Percentages listed indicate the percentage of individual responses divided by total responses (n=61), as well as the percentage of individual responses divided by the overall N (N=267).

Table 4

General Topics of Stories/Photos/Other Looked at in Newspaper

Topic	Frequency
News	313
Front page news	59
Local news	44
Weather news	32
Plane crash	26
International events	21
Police, court news	19
National political stories	15
Obituaries	14
Headlines	10
News about local schools	9
Weddings, birth	8
Accidents	5
Local government news	5
National news	5
Government issues	5
Current events	4
Drugs	3
Environmental news	3

(*table continues*)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Frequency
KKK rally	3
Olympic bombing	3
Boy with disease	2
Education issues	2
Immigration	2
Child Custody Case	1
Gangs	1
Gay marriage	1
Government	1
Hispanic issues	1
Law	1
Layoffs	1
Mafia	1
Racism	1
Space	1
Strikes	1
Taxes	1
Week in review	1
Welfare	1
Entertainment	208
Comics	63
Entertainment	42

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Frequency
Movie listings	39
Horoscope	25
Advice columns	8
TV guide	8
Crossword	5
Local art issues/art	5
Events	2
Lotto	2
Movie reviews	2
Book review	1
Concert reviews	1
Concert schedules	1
Music	1
Reviews	1
Scrabble	1
Word Search	1
Advertising	124
Classified ads	60
Advertising	19
Other merchant ads	11
Real estate ads	11
Car ads	7

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Frequency
Employment ads	7
Coupons	5
Apartment ads	2
Grocery ads	1
Personals	1
Sports	119
Sports	83
Olympic sports	23
Professional sports	11
College sports	1
Junior leagues	1
Features	76
Features	21
Health news	12
Food/recipes	6
Travel	6
Fashion	4
Science	4
Stories about young people	4
Auto	2
Children	2
Daily living	2

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Frequency	
Animals		1
Astronomy		1
Computers		1
History		1
Kudos		1
Olympic burnout		1
Parade magazine		1
Poems		1
Sex		1
Social issues		1
Society pages		1
Technology		1
Women's		1
Business	43	
Homes and real estate		12
Business news		11
Stock reports		11
Money		7
Local Italian food store		1
Public relations		1
Comment	13	
Editorial/Comment pages		13

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Topic	Frequency
Photos	7
Photos	4
Front page photos	2
Stories with photos	1
Everything	1
None	1

Note: A total of 267 students provided 905 responses.

Table 5

Additional Information Wanted

Topic(s)	Frequency	Percentage
More detail/follow-up on news event	27	37.50%
Entertainment	17	23.61%
More detailed ads	10	13.89%
Sports	5	6.94%
Arts	3	4.17%
Business news	3	4.17%
Classes in community	2	2.78%
Everything	1	1.39%
Internet	1	1.39%
Pictures	1	1.39%
Travel	1	1.39%
Yes, but I can't recall	1	1.39%
How to get more info.	1	1.39%
Better weather info.	1	1.39%
Background	1	1.39%

Note. A total of 72 of the 267 participants wanted additional information. The percentages listed represent the frequency of the responses divided by the total number of responses.

Table 6

Newspaper Items Sought But Not Found

Item(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Specific ad	7	18.42%
Details on events	6	15.72%
Follow-ups	4	10.53%
More detailed sports	4	10.53%
Horoscope	3	7.89%
Movies	2	5.26%
Positive stories	2	5.26%
International news	2	5.26%
Free money	1	2.63%
Recipes	1	2.63%
A story on a poll (for class)	1	2.63%
More science news	1	2.63%
More interesting stuff to read	1	2.63%
Decent funnies	1	2.63%
Travel	1	2.63%
Sexual tips	1	2.63%

Note. A total of 38 of the 267 participants sought items in the newspapers without finding them. The percentages represent the frequency of the responses divided by the total number of responses.

Table 7

Ways a Newspaper "Helps You Live Your Life"

Way(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Informs me about issues	51	27.57%
Make decisions on purchases	23	12.43%
Inform me about movies/concerts/events	21	11.35%
Make weather-related decisions	18	9.73%
Make health-related decisions	14	7.57%
Make decisions about life	12	6.49%
Make recipes	11	5.95%
Learn how-to do something	10	5.41%
Find a job	8	4.32%
Make voting decisions	8	4.32%
Warn me about crime/safety issues	5	2.70%
Start campfires	1	.54%
Advertise my business	1	.54%
Avoid roads under construction	1	.54%
Make me laugh (comics)	1	.54%

Note. A total of 185 of the 267 participants listed responses. The percentages represent the frequency of the responses divided by the total number of responses.

Table 8

Ways a Newspaper Could Help Live Life

Way(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Advice/information on decisions	17	22.67%
Tell you what's going on	15	20.00%
Money issues	9	12.00%
Be less biased	8	10.67%
Health information	6	8.00%
Employment/jobs	4	5.33%
More/better ads	3	4.00%
Make me aware of social issues	3	4.00%
Weather	3	4.00%
Be more positive	2	2.67%
Bring people together (network)	1	1.34%
Improve intelligence	1	1.34%

(table continues)

Table 8 (continued)

Way(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Inform about classes	1	1.34%
Put newspaper online to save paper	1	1.34%
Who to contact for more information	1	1.34%

Note. A total of 75 of the 267 participants listed responses. The percentages represent the frequency of the responses divided by the total number of responses.

Table 9

Information That Would Be Helpful

Information	Frequency	Percentage
Health information	26	21.49%
Money information (interest rates, jobs)	24	19.83%
Political views of candidates	15	12.40%
Information/advice on decisions	11	9.10%
Education issues	6	4.96%
Weather-related decisions	6	4.96%
More viewpoints	4	3.31%
Entertainment news	3	2.48%
Sports	3	2.48%
Religion	2	1.65%
Where to live/work	2	1.65%
Features	2	1.65%
Local news	2	1.65%
Real-life situations	2	1.65%
Teen topics	2	1.65%
Crime/safety issues	1	.83%
Everything	1	.83%
Fashion	1	.83%
Gay issues	1	.83%

(table continues)

Table 9 (continued)

Information	Frequency	Percentage
Horoscope	1	.83%
How I can make a difference	1	.83%
How-to crafts	1	.83%
How-to on environmental issues	1	.83%
Science/technology	1	.83%
Variety	1	.83%
Wars	1	.83%

Note. A total of 121 of the 267 participants listed responses. The percentages represent the frequency of the responses divided by the total number of responses.

Table 10

Type of Information Accessed by Computer

Information	Frequency	Percentage
Research for school/work	45	34.10%
News	24	18.18%
Surfing	18	13.64%
Entertainment	11	8.33%
Sports	6	4.55%
Weather	6	4.55%
Travel	5	3.79%
Financial news, stocks	4	3.03%
Spirituality	3	2.27%
History	2	1.52%
Magazines	1	.76%
Computer programs	1	.76%
Information on cars	1	.76%
Politics	1	.76%
Better weather information	1	.76%
Background	1	.76%
E-mail	1	.76%
Soap opera updates	1	.75%

Note. A total of 132 of the 267 participants listed responses. Percentages represent the frequency of the responses divided by the total number of responses.

Changing Values in the Newsroom:

A Survey of Daily Newspaper Staff Members

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Changing Values in the Newsroom:

A Survey of Daily Newspaper Staff Members

Some observers see recent pressures on the American news media bringing journalists to a crossroads of ethical practice. For example Conrad Fink (1995), updating his textbook on media ethics, finds that "everywhere are signs of ethical deterioration." David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit (1996) note "a rising tide of concern about media ethics." Newspaper circulations that have been stagnant or declining since the 1960s, and the resulting shrinking market penetration has led newspapers to try to reinvent themselves to recapture the attention of the disappearing readers. Marketing pressures have transformed both the design and content of newspapers as they seek to capture nonsubscribers and retain readers (Underwood & Stamm, 1992). One aspect of the change in the economic climate in which newspapers' income sources are under siege is that news editors can no longer ignore the business side of the newspaper (Meyer, 1983, Underwood, 1993). Editors have to pay more attention to the underlying business dynamics (Shumate, 1992). And the trend toward public ownership of newspaper companies has exposed their news and editorial sides to the market's pressures for short-term profitability.

Traditional journalism that emphasized the values of fairness, balance and the healing effect of light shed on public problems established newspapers' credibility among the readers and by extension created a market among advertisers who wanted their products and services featured in such a respected medium (Meyer, 1994). Advertisers were eager to deliver their message in a publication that was trusted by the readers. Newspapers' credibility represented economic value. The ethic of journalistic objectivity was central to this perception of credibility. The economic climate that created the model of the objective, passive journalist has changed in recent decades. In 1967, about 72 percent of adults in the United States read a newspaper every day. In 1996, according to the General Social Survey, the number was down to 42 percent. Declining market penetration of daily newspapers opened the door for other media to challenge the daily newspaper for advertising dollars.

Meanwhile, a departure from the traditional way that journalists have practiced their craft has emerged in the past decade. The public journalism movement seeks to redefine the journalist's role and, in the view of some (but not all) observers, alters journalism ethics (Shepard, 1994). Public journalism casts the press in a proactive role of presenting information to the readers to motivate community action in order to solve problems and of creating the forum for citizens to become politically active. This role is viewed by critics as a threat to the traditional journalism ethic that calls on journalists to be fair, balanced and detached in their presentation of the news (e.g. Yardley, 1996).

Accompanying the questioning of journalistic roles and values is the dramatic erosion of public confidence in news professionals' ethical standards during the 1980s and 1990s. A January 1996 poll by the Freedom Forum (1997) found that most people said they distrusted the news media as a whole and only 19 percent rated ethical standards of journalists as high or very high. In a December 1996 Harris poll (Harper, 1996), 75 percent of American adults said that there was political bias at work in journalism and only a third said that the media dealt fairly with all sides. In a 1996 Gallup poll (Boylan, 1997), only 23 percent of the public rated television reporters as having either high or very high honesty and ethical standards and even fewer respondents (17 percent) rated newspaper reporters as having high or very high ethical standards. Public perception of journalistic honesty and ethical standards has declined since 1980 (Fitzsimon & McGill, 1995).

Along with the public, media critics have railed against malfeasance and unethical practice by the press. The headline on the cover of the November 1995 ethics issue of *Quill* magazine screamed: "Ethics: How fast are we falling?" In the lead article of that issue, Mike Wallace (1995) acknowledged that criticism of the media was not new but what was new was "the intensity and the volume of criticism that's coming from within the press itself" (p. 21). Wallace noted the avalanche of criticism of declining values in journalism practice and issued a call for the resurrection of the National News Council. In the 8 December 1996 broadcast of "60 Minutes," Wallace (Jenkins, 1997) renewed his call to establish such a news watchdog group.

The growing public distrust of the media's standards of practice and the depth of outright hostility toward the news media is not by itself evidence that the standards by which news professionals work have deteriorated during the 1980s and 1990s. This study attempts to test by empirical methods whether traditional journalism values have changed in the newsrooms of U.S. daily newspapers. The hypothesis is that U.S. daily newspaper journalists' commitment to traditional newsroom values has eroded. Research questions include: (1) How have values in the newsroom changed? (2) What new values have emerged in the newsroom? (3) Have the business pressures generated from the ownership of newspapers by publicly-traded companies changed values in the newsroom?

Method

In 1982, the American Society of Newspaper Editors commissioned a study of the professional values of newspaper publishers, editors and staff members (Meyer, 1983, 1987). We have replicated most of the staff segment of that study. In addition to demographic questions, the questionnaire asked journalists to respond to hypothetical ethical situations dealing with issues such as conflict of interest, privacy, misrepresentation and objectivity as well as questions about journalism practice at the respondent's newspaper and more general questions about the respondent's attitude toward journalism practice and ethics.

In sampling, we had to deal with the paradox that most newspapers are small while most readers receive the larger papers. A simple random sample of the 1,514 daily newspapers would over-represent the readers of small papers and exclude many who read the larger papers. A sample design can represent readers or it can represent newspapers, but it can't do justice to both. As in the 1982 study, we chose to represent readers. Our initial sample of 1,000 news-editorial staff members at American daily newspapers was therefore drawn with the probability of selection proportionate to the size of the daily circulation. We did this by taking the circulation numbers in the 1996 *Editor & Publisher Yearbook* and statistically stacking all the issues of daily newspapers on top of one another for a total weekday circulation of 58,620,032. We chose a random starting point between zero and 58,620 and then pulled a newspaper from the stack at every 58,620th newspaper to yield the sample of 1,000.

Both the 1982 and 1996 samples were in this way designed to be self-weighting, representing journalists serving a random selection of newspaper readers in the United

States. Of course, newspapers with a circulation greater than 58,620 would have the chance of being selected more than once. *The Wall Street Journal*, the newspaper with the largest daily circulation, was selected 31 times, and surveys were sent to 31 *Journal* staffers. In the 1982 study, only one staff response was sought from each newspaper, and those with multiple hits were given their proportional representation by replicating responses from the one interview obtained. Because such weights inflate the sample size and artificially reduce the variance, we did separate computer runs when testing the significance of differences between the 1982 and 1996 studies. The percentages we report use the replications, but significance tests were done .after reweighting the 1982 sample to give each respondent equal impact.

For the first and second hits at a newspaper in the 1996 sample, we chose at random two names from the 1996 *Editor & Publisher Yearbook*. For larger newspapers with more than two hits, the third and subsequent staff members were chosen at random from the bylines of local staff writers in a particular issue of the newspaper. The approach to the selection ensured that both supervisors as well reporters and other staff members would be included in the sample. This method was roughly equivalent to the one used in 1982. In that survey, the highest-ranking editor of each newspaper was interviewed by telephone and asked to name one staff member, based on a rotated list of newsroom job functions. That method also produced a mix of reporters and supervisors.

The mail survey procedure followed Dillman's total design method (1978). In November 1996, we mailed 1,000 questionnaires containing approximately 100 variables and coded with identification numbers for response tracking. A week later we sent a reminder post card. In early December we mailed nonrespondents a second copy of the survey, with a letter urging the importance of their response. Those who did not respond received a third copy of the survey by certified mail.

General characteristics of the journalists who responded

A total of 617 editors and news-editorial staffers from 375 different newspapers responded for a 62 percent response rate. This was significantly less than the 72.5 percent response rate achieved in the earlier study. Possible causes are (1) the absence of ASNE support for this study which had helped motivate respondents in 1982, (2) declining support for polls in general, or (3) the undetected disappearance of some of the respondents from our sample frame due to the time lag between Editor & Publisher's data collection and availability of its Yearbook. As evidence that the two samples are comparable, we found that race, gender, and education changes were in the expected direction (more females, minorities and college graduates) and that religious affiliations did not change (both samples were 44 percent Protestant and 23 percent Catholic).

The average age of respondents was 37 in 1982 and 42 in 1996. This shift is consistent with the finding of Weaver and Wilhoit (1996), that there was a 3.4-year increase in the median age of American journalists between 1982 and 1992. On average the respondents had worked 18 years in the newspaper business and had worked for their current employer nearly 12 years (not asked of staffers in 1982). Sixty-four percent of the respondents were male compared to 69 percent male in 1982.

While the proportion of minorities grew, the gain was surprisingly small. Whites were 97 percent in 1982 and 95 percent in 1996. A differential response rate might have led to under-representation of minorities in both surveys.

Ethical Sensitivity

As in the 1982 study, we did not presume to judge whether our respondents were answering ethically or unethically. Instead, we asked them to respond to a list of hypothetical journalistic dilemmas, and gave an ordered selection of response choices. In some situations, of course, the most sensitive response could be construed as unethical. Our conceptualization stops short of making that judgment. The percentage of respondents who chose an option is listed, both for the 1996 survey and the 1982 survey. Rounding may cause the total to be one greater or lower than 100 percent.

One of the most dramatic changes over the 14-year period involves the use of deception. One scenario involved a case of pure eavesdropping by electronic means:

Q1 A just-nominated presidential candidate is meeting with state party chairpersons to discuss his choice for vice presidential candidate. The meeting is closed to the press. A reporter, pretending to be a party staff person, hands a briefcase to one of the people going into the meeting and asks him to leave it on the table for his boss. The briefcase contains a tape recorder, and the reporter retrieves it after the meeting. Should the editor:

01 - Admonish the reporter and kill the story.
1996: 65 percent 1982: 44 percent
02 - Admonish the reporter, but use the information as background for conventional reporting.
1996: 29 percent 1982: 31 percent
03 - Admonish the reporter, but use the story.
1996: 2 percent 1982: 6 percent
04 - Reward the reporter and use the story.
1996: 5 percent 1982: 20 percent

(Chi square = 41.8, df = 3, $p < .000001$)

This represents a sharp decline in support for concealed electronic surveillance. In 1982, the technology was relatively new. In 1996, the memory of ABC's investigation of Food Lion and the backlash from that episode were still fresh, although most respondents had returned the questionnaire before the jury reached its verdict (Pressley, 1996). Opposition to the use of tools that are more appropriate to electronic media might be one means by which newspaper people differentiate themselves from their visual competitors.

Another question on the survey involved a more subtle deception -- a reporter concealing or lying about his or her own strongly held political views in covering a story:

Q2 A reporter is assigned to find out about the activities of a political action group whose objectives are in sharp opposition to his own strongly-held views. To get the story, he needs the cooperation of group members. Should the reporter:

01 - Ask the editor to assign someone else to the story.
1996: 20 percent **1982: 26 percent**
02 - Take care to explain his own views to the sources so that they can take them into account in deciding how to deal with him.
1996: 2 percent **1982: 1 percent**
03 - Keep quiet about his own views, but be frank and forthcoming if asked.
1996: 48 percent **1982: 49 percent**
04 - Adopt the stance of a sympathetic neutral.
1996: 29 percent **1982: 24 percent**

(Not significant)

Here the willingness to engage in deception is not statistically different from the earlier period. Passive deception, such as masking one's true feelings, has generally been accorded greater favor than active or complex deceptions. Also, supervisors were significantly less willing than the rank-and-file to adopt the stance of a sympathetic neutral. In the current survey, 23 percent of supervisors versus 33 percent of the rank-and-file staff members (chi-square=13.32, df=4, $p < .01$) supported that stance. Nearly half of the respondents would just keep quiet about their views, a traditional journalistic practice.

A related question dealt with the integrity of pledges of confidentiality:

Q3 Newspaper people have different ideas about respecting pledges of confidentiality.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

01 - A pledge of confidentiality to a source should always be kept no matter what the circumstances, even if it means a long jail term for the reporter and heavy financial cost to the newspaper.
1996: 40 percent 1982: 30 percent

02 - A pledge of confidentiality should always be taken seriously, but it can be violated in unusual circumstances, as when it is learned the source has lied to the reporter.
1996: 54 percent 1982: 61 percent

03 - A pledge of confidentiality can be broken if keeping it would do serious harm to the community.
1996: 6 percent 1982: 9 percent

04 - Pledges of confidentiality are largely rhetorical devices and not intended to be taken seriously.
1996: 0 percent 1982: 0 percent

(Chi square = 7.66, df = 3, p < .054)

Traditional respect for pledges of confidentially has been maintained and, if it has changed at all, increased. The gain of 10 percent in the absolutist position on keeping promises of confidentiality is marginally significant. One possible factor could be awareness of Cohen v. Cowles Media Co. (1991), in which the Supreme Court of the United States said that journalists might be financially liable for its broken promises of confidentiality.

Related to the concern for the privacy of a source's identity is the embarrassment of subjects of newsworthy stories by publishing private embarrassing facts about the subject. The following question suggests how willing journalists are to reveal private, even sensational information about those in the news:

Q4 A prominent citizen is vacationing alone in Key West, and his hotel burns down. The wire service story lists him among those who escaped uninjured and identifies the hotel as a popular gathering place for affluent gays. The citizen says he'll commit suicide if you publish his name in the story. Should the editor:

01 - Kill the story.
1996: 2 percent **1982: 0 percent**
02- Publish the story, but without mentioning the local citizen.
1996: 14 percent **1982: 8 percent**
03 - Publish the story, but without mentioning the gay angle.
1996: 54 percent **1982: 48 percent**
04 - Publish the story in full.
1996: 30 percent **1982: 44 percent**

(Chi square = 16.8, df = 3, $p < .0008$.)

Greater sensitivity to issues of gender and sexual preference characterizes today's journalists. The traditional reaction, to publish all the journalist knows, honors the newsworthiness test of publishing what would interest people despite its impact on persons involved in the news. However, journalists do choose to withhold certain information, such as the identity of rape victims. The 1996 respondents were more willing than their 1982 counterparts to respect the privacy of the individual involved by not noting the gay angle or leaving the person's name out.

Another huge area of concern in journalistic practice is avoiding conflicts of interest, that is situations in which one's personal interests or those of one's employer are related to the news the journalist is reporting. A business writer owns stock in a company on which she reports. Or a city hall writer reports a zoning dispute involving land on which the newspaper wants to build its new printing plant.

Four items on the survey measured financial conflict of interest. One question presented to the editors and reporters involved an investigative reporter who wrote an article on property tax assessments:

Q5 An investigative reporter does a thorough and praiseworthy expose of inequalities in tax assessment practices. In the course of investigating for the story, he looks at his own assessment records and finds that a value-enhancing addition to his property was never recorded, and as a result, his taxes are $300 less than they should be. He reports this fact in the first draft of his story, but, later, at the urging of his wife, takes it out. Should the editor:

01 - Insist that he leave the information in, even though it will raise the reporter's taxes.
1996: 60 percent 1982: 66 percent
02 - Talk to the wife and try to persuade her that the reporter's honesty at leaving it in will be rewarded, someday.
1996: 1 percent 1982: 3 percent
03 - Leave it to the reporter to decide, but appeal to his conscience.
1996: 29 percent 1982: 23 percent
04 - Don't interfere.
1996: 10 percent 1982: 8 percent

(Not significant)

A clear majority in both surveys took a hard line against the reporter and would make him tell of his own undervaluation and pay more taxes. Clearly most journalists indicated a strong conscience about "rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." The second option, a bit traditional in its wording, given the large percentage of female as well as unmarried reporters, did not gain many supporters in 1982 and almost none in 1996. This question shows no decline in standards.

The next two conflict-of-interest indicators deal with outrageous behavior that is clearly wrong. The only issue is how severe the management response out to be. The first deals with a newspaper business manager who is offered a junket, a trip paid for by someone else:

Q6 The business manager of the company has developed close friendships with Canadian newsprint suppliers, reinforced by regular hunting trips in the north woods as their guest. The company decides to prohibit managers from accepting favors from suppliers. The business manager continues to take the trips. Should the publisher:

01 Fire the business manager.

1996: 28 percent 1982: 18 percent

02 Impose discipline short of firing and extract a promise that it will not happen again.

1996: 47 percent 1982: 48 percent

03 Advise the business manager to pay his own way on these trips or reciprocate by hosting the suppliers on equivalent outings.

1996: 23 percent 1982: 32 percent

04 Decide that the no-favor rule should not apply to such long-standing and clearly benign activities.

1996: 1 percent 1982: 2 percent

(Chi square = 14.4, df = 3, $p < .0025$)

Why were the journalists in 1996 so much tougher on the business manager than their 1982 predecessors?. We suspect that one consequence of the breaching of the wall between business and news sides is that the business side is held more accountable to the kinds of conflict-of-interest standards traditional for news people. In 1982, news people were conditioned to neither know nor care what went on on the business side. This could be a sign of movement toward the "ethical wholeness" advocated by Meyer (1983) in his report to ASNE.

The next hypothetical case deals with staff malfeasance, using one's position at the newspaper to profit in an outside business:

Q7 The chief photographer moonlights as a wedding photographer. The father of a bride calls the editor and says the photographer has made a sales pitch to his daughter and included a sly hint that if he is hired for the job, her picture has a better chance of making the society page. The editor investigates and confirms that this is the photographer's regular practice. Should the editor:

01 - Fire the photographer.

1996: 41 percent 1982: 48 percent

02 - Impose lesser discipline and order the photographer to stop moonlighting.

1996: 13 percent 1982: 16 percent

03 - Allow the photographer to continue moonlighting but order him not to use--or pretend to use--his position to gain favored treatment for clients.

1997: 46 percent 1982: 36 percent
04 - Ask the photographer to be more discreet.
1996: 0 percent 1982: 0 percent

(Not significant)

This is one of the few items where journalists in 1996 appeared somewhat more lenient than those in 1982, but the appearance lacks statistical significance. A stronger case can be made by combining the tougher lines in options one and two. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the respondents in 1982 wanted to take a hard line with the photographer, fire him or order him to stop moonlighting, versus only 54 percent in 1996. The comparison still falls well short of significant.

Another financial conflict of interest involved speaker fees offered to journalists by a for-profit corporation:

Q8 An investigative reporter uses a computer to analyze criminal court records and writes a prize-winning series. A major computer manufacturer then offers to pay him $500 to speak at a seminar for reporters which it is sponsoring at a university. Which of the following best describes your view?

01 - The reporter should not be allowed to make the speech.
1996: 8 percent 1982: 5 percent
02 - The reporter should be allowed to make the speech but not to accept the honorarium.
1996: 51 percent 1982: 41 percent
03 - The reporter should be allowed to make the speech, but accept the $500 only if the honorarium is paid through the university.
1996: 15 percent 1982: 16 percent
04 - The reporter should be allowed to make the speech and accept the $500 from the computer manufacturer.
1996: 27 percent 1982: 38 percent

(Chi square = 9.04, df = 3, $p < .029$

Since 1982, increasing attention has been paid to the merging of news and entertainment functions in celebrity journalists. Articles in the trade press have been critical, and we see a corresponding increase in sensitivity toward speaking fees as potential conflict of interest reflected in these numbers.

Three conflict-of-interest scenarios involved journalists who get too close to the subjects on whom the journalists have to report. In the first two, a political reporter becomes good friends with political leaders:

Q9 Your Washington correspondent has spent years developing friendships with the key people now in power, and it is paying off. He knows the town well, and they are relative newcomers, so he is frequently consulted by the White House staff and the President's political operatives before key decisions are made. Should the editor:

01 - Fire the Washington correspondent.
1996: 4 percent 1982: 1 percent
02 - Move the correspondent to another city.
1996: 18 percent 1982: 11 percent
03 - Admonish the Washington correspondent to maintain a reasonable distance from his sources.
1996: 64 percent 1982: 74 percent
04 - Reward the Washington correspondent for developing such a good knowledge of his subject and such loyal sources.
1996: 15 percent 1982: 14 percent

(Not significant)

Although the change is not significant, it is in the direction of greater sensitivity toward conflict of interest. Today there are more celebrity journalists who have moved back and forth between politics and journalism, and a larger sample might have shown significant concern over that development.

As in 1982, localizing the Washington scenario to city hall produced different results, but the movement over time was also in the direction of greater sensitivity to potential conflict.

Q10 Your paper's city hall reporter has gotten so close to the mayor and his staff that they frequently consult him before making major decisions. Should the editor:

01 - Fire the reporter.
1996: 4 percent 1982: 1 percent
02 - Move the reporter to a different beat.
1996: 40 percent 1982: 30 percent
03 Admonish the reporter to maintain a reasonable distance from his sources.
1996: 45 percent 1982: 61 percent
04 -Reward the reporter for developing such a good knowledge of his subject and such loyal sources.
1996: 11 percent 1982: 9 percent

(Chi square = 9.8, df = 3, p < .021)

Conflict close to home is more visible, and by localizing the scenario we elicited greater sentiment for moving the reporter to a different beat. Now the shift from the earlier period is statistically significant. Supervisors, by more than two-to-one, were more interested in reining in the reporter than were their rank-and-file news people.

The respondents were even tougher in a third scenario in which the journalist is involved in a business with the potential subject of his reporting:

Q11 The restaurant reviewer at your paper has become friendly with a local restaurant operator and, working without pay, has helped his friend to design and plan a new restaurant with a continental theme--the exact sort of restaurant whose absence in your town he has decried in his column. Should the editor:

01 - Fire the restaurant critic.
1996: 14 percent 1982: 10 percent
02 - Admonish the critic not to get so close to sources, and ban any mention of the new restaurant in his column.
1996: 58 percent 1982: 54 percent
03 - Advise the critic not to do it again, but take no further action.
1996: 14 percent 1982: 23 percent
04 - Do nothing.
1996: 14 percent 1982: 13 percent

(Chi square = 39.6, df = 3, p < .000001)

Once again, the shift is toward greater sensitivity to the need for journalistic independence and less tolerance for actions that could compromise that independence.

The final conflict-of-interest hypothetical situation involved reporting on a sports team which the newspaper company owns:

Q12 The company that owns a major metropolitan newspaper also owns a major sports franchise in that town. Should the paper:

01 - Sell the franchise
1996: 19 percent 1982: 22 percent
02- Bend over backwards to be fair and treat the company-owned team with more skepticism and outright criticism than are accorded other teams.
1996: 2 percent 1982: 1 percent
03 - Treat the team exactly as it treats any other team.
1996: 77 percent 1982: 75 percent
03 - Try to build up local interest in the team it owns, because it is good for community spirit as well as profitable to the company.
1996: 3 percent 1982: 3 percent

(Not significant)

No change here. In both surveys, three-fourths wanted to treat the team exactly as it treated any other team, and one in five wanted to divest the sports franchise. If moral standards were weakening, we would expect greater tolerance for merging news and entertainment functions in a single company.

The final scenario covers an issue that has reentered the discussion recently: paying sources for their stories. In the O.J. Simpson era, the tabloids are scooping traditional news media because they pay sources for stories (Toobin, 1994). This scenario presents a range of responses from paying for information to paying a source nothing:

Q13 An investigative reporter discovers a former city employee now living in another state who has evidence of a kickback scheme involving the mayor and half the city council. He appears interested in cooperating with your investigation, but indicates that he will want money. Should your paper:

01 - Pay nothing.
1996: 70 percent 1982: 56 percent
02 Pay his out-of-pocket expenses only.
1996: 24 percent 1982: 32 percent
03 - Put him on the payroll for the time that he spends working with your staff in gathering and documenting the facts, plus expenses.
1996: 4 percent 1982: 6 percent
04 - Pay an honorarium based on the news value of the story.
1996: 2 percent 1982: 6 percent

(Chi square = 20.5, df = 3, p < .0002)

Checkbook journalism is fading in acceptability. The overwhelming majority of staff members in both surveys opted to pay only the source's out of pocket expenses or pay nothing: The 1996 respondents were even more ethically sensitive about buying information, unwilling even to pay a source's expenses: Seventy percent said to pay nothing versus 56 percent in 1982.

The final hypothetical case is based on an incident in Florida where newspaper companies contributed money to a campaign to defeat a referendum that would have legalized gambling. This direct involvement in civic action v. traditional detachment was controversial long before the concept of civic journalism had reached the consciousness of journalists.

Q14. Some newspaper companies in Florida donated money to a campaign to defeat a statewide referendum which, passed, would have legalized gambling. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view on this action?

01 A newspaper that takes an editorial stand on an issue has a right, even a duty, to back up its belief with its money.
1996: 6 percent 1982: 6 percent
02 The contributions are justified if the referendum would have a detrimental effect on the business climate in which the newspaper operates.
1996: 4 percent 1982: 4 percent

03 The contributions should not have been made because they might lead readers to question the objectivity of the papers' news coverage.
1996: 39 percent 1982: 34 percent
04 No political contributions should ever be made by newspapers; the news and editorial columns are powerful enough already, and adding money only indicates inappropriate hunger for more power.
1996: 51 percent 1982: 57 percent

(Not significant)

Direct involvement in civic activity was as frowned upon at the end of 1996 as it was 14 years earlier.

In general, it appears that ethical sensitivity has not suffered in the past decade and a half, at least at the staff level. Before making such a sweeping generalization, we should combine the results described above into a single measure. But first, we must verify that all are indeed measuring the same underlying phenomenon.

The items were recoded so that the end of the scale judged by the authors to represent the greater ethical sensitivity was a 1 and the least sensitive response was a 4. We then inspected the correlation matrix. Two items were a poor fit with the others.

One was the item on the Key West fire. The case of the Key West fire and the protection of the home-town person is different from the others in several ways. It is not a good statistical fit with the others. The question may have less to do with any specific trend in journalism ethics than with a general social shift of more sympathetic attitudes toward gays. And the direction of movement -- toward not publishing the person's name -- goes contrary to the traditional ethic of always publishing the facts without fearing or favoring any interest or individual. Thus a case can be made that this item represents a deterioration in traditional news ethics rather than a heightened sensitivity. Whatever the substantive case, its idiosyncratic statistical behavior justifies dropping it from further analysis.

A different problem arose with the issue of how a reporter should behave when working with sources whose views he or she strongly opposes. The correlation pattern indicates that it is also measuring something different from the other items. Perhaps its five choices lack the clear natural order needed for treatment as a continuous variable. In any event, this item was also dropped from the scale.

The remaining 12 items formed a reasonably coherent correlation matrix with a Chronbach's Alpha of .61 for the 1996 survey and .60 for the combined responses. That gave us some confidence that the remaining 12 items measure the same underlying concept that we chose to call ethical sensitivity. We therefore compared the means (where the lower score denotes the greater ethical sensitivity).

For the 1982 sample, the mean score (on a scale of 1-4) was 2.346.

For the 1996 sample, the mean score was 2.23.

Variances in the two samples were approximately equal, yielding a Student's t value of 4.83, significant with $p < .0001$. Ethical sensitivity among newspaper staff people in the United States is growing, not declining.

We looked for two possible predictors of ethical sensitivity but fell short of statistical significance.

Better educated journalists report higher sensitivity. The sensitivity scores for the 1996 sample (low scores denote high sensitivity):

Fewer than four years of college:	**2.31**
Four years of college	**2.24**

Post-graduate education	**2.20**

Analysis of variance showed the differences between groups to be marginally significant ($p = .056$).

The other predictor was working for a newspaper owned by a company whose shares are publicly traded. Journalists working for these companies reported *greater* ethical sensitivity, but the difference was insignificant.

Privately owned	2.26
Publicly traded	2.21

(Students $t = 1.53$, df = 601, $p < .125$)

Interpretation and conclusions

Six of our 12 items in the scale of ethical sensitivity changed significantly in the 14 years and six did not. Those that did change all moved in the direction of greater sensitivity -- contrary to the fears and suspicions that motivated our inquiry. How could we have been so wrong? Perhaps we can better understand what has happened by focusing on the six that changed. Ethical sensitivity increased in the following ways:

Q1. **Electronic eavesdropping**: support decreased.

Q6. **Business-side conflict of interest**: tolerance dropped.

Q8. **Honoraria for speeches**: a more restrictive view prevailed.

Q10. **Closeness to government sources**: more red flags at the local level.

Q11. **Closeness to business sources**: less tolerance.

Q13. **Checkbook journalism**: greater disapproval.

Each represents a traditional value of journalism. There is anecdotal evidence that each is under pressure. Are the anecdotes misleading? Could the alarming conjectures cited at the beginning of this report be wrong? Should we accept the null hypothesis -- that there is no decline in ethical standards?

The benign interpretation of these data is that the newspaper industry is an oasis of rectitude in a desert of moral decay. If so, its problems stem from poor public relations, a failure at differentiating itself in the public mind from news and entertainment media in general. Newspaper managers can blame television as the real rascal.

While that view might well contain elements of truth, we would like to suggest another, darker interpretation. We offer two justifications.

Sometimes the adherents of a cherished value are the most thoughtful and vigorous in its defense just at the moment when it is under attack. The ideology of the American revolution was created by gifted philosophers, writers, and orators who saw themselves defending the fading light of English liberty (Bailyn, 1967). The fear of losing their cherished Enlightenment-based freedoms heightened their consciousness. Newspaper staff people, perceiving that both their values and their institutions are threatened by social and technological change, may be more supportive and protective of those values than ever before for the same kind of reason. The baseline survey of 1982 was closer to a time when such values could be taken for granted with more apparent safety. Today the attacks on cherished news values are more visible.

The second justification for withholding an "all's well" signal is that journalism itself as a unified concept is disappearing. Part of it is merging with entertainment and adopting its values by, for example, awarding celebrity status and pay to its superstars according to their ability to amuse. Other segments are merging with advertising and public relations and adopting the values of those fields. We should expect that the people in our survey, the working men and women at America's daily newspapers, would be the last to be corrupted by business and technological innovation. Indeed, the warnings that are being sounded and that we cite as justification for our research are more about institutional than individual behavior.

The working news people in our survey share this concern. They feel the pressure from changing forms of ownership. The proportion who believe that investor-owned newspaper companies serve their communities differently is up from a 39 percent minority in 1982 to a 51 percent majority in 1996 (Chi square = 7.8, df = 1, $p > 006$). Among those who see a difference, the proportion believing that public ownership "often" hinders a newspaper's ability to serve its community doubled, from 10 percent in 1982 to 23 percent in 1996 (Chi square = 9.17, df = 3, $p > .028$). More than three out of four now say this hindrance exists at least some of the time.

Finally, 72 percent of the news people who themselves work for newspapers owned by publicly-held companies -- and believe that public ownership makes any difference at all -- say that it often or sometimes hinders a paper's ability to serve the local community.

Such observations make the content of the call for further research rather obvious. If institutional cultures are changing in ways that threaten traditional newspaper values, we should be studying the creators of those cultures, the editors and publishers. The same baseline data that we used for their newsroom people exist for them, and we earnestly hope that someone will follow our example and replicate the top-management portion of the 1982 study.

And a further step is needed. In the 1982 survey, 78 percent of newspaper readers represented by the sample were served by group-owned newspapers. In 1996, the number was 85 percent. Publishers are no longer autonomous creators of organizational culture so much as transmitters of culture that is the sum effect of decisions made at group headquarters. A fourth group needs to become the object of ethical scrutiny and that is the managers and directors of the newspaper holding companies. Our bottom-up approach for monitoring ethical change is worthwhile, but it needs to be supplemented with a top-down inquiry. Studying the source of ethical change could produce information that is even more interesting and has better predictive power. Only then can we know for sure whether a place is to be found for traditional values in the new media marketplace or whether the heightened ethical sensitivity of today's newspaper staff people is just an Indian summer for journalism morals.

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Newspaper Editors' Policies and Attitudes Toward Coverage of Domestic Assault

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Newspaper Editors' Policies and Attitudes Toward Coverage of Domestic Assault

Abstract

According to a mail survey conducted in February 1995, during the O.J. Simpson trial, few newspaper editors reported having formal policies to assist reporters covering domestic assault stories. Editors also felt that domestic assault presented more legal risks than other types of assault, but that the coverage of domestic violence did not pose ethical problems for their newspapers. A comparison with a 1990 survey asking identical questions suggests that editors may revise their attitudes based on news events but are reluctant to change policies.

Covering Domestic Assault: Newspaper Editors' Policies and Attitudes

To call the coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial "extensive" would be a gross understatement. In fact, the coverage of the coverage of the trial was a major theme of the news reports. *New York* magazine termed the reporting of the trial "O.J. overkill."[1] Other newspapers called the coverage "the O.J. media frenzy"[2] and "the O.J. binge."[3]

Amid the furor accompanying the extensive coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial were allegations that Simpson had physically abused Nicole Brown Simpson, his late wife. Prosecutors fought to convince jurors that beyond the headlines and the hype, the case boiled down to one thing: the rage of a jealous husband unleashed against his ex-wife. Through the media lens, the topic of domestic violence -- at least as portrayed in the life of Nicole Brown Simpson -- became a daily ingredient of the morning paper and the evening news.

Thus, the nation's press quickly discovered domestic violence as an important issue. *USA Today Magazine* responded by reporting that domestic violence was "America's dark little secret, now thrust into prominence by media coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial."[4] Even *People* magazine examined the issue of domestic violence, calling O.J. Simpson "the man with two faces."[5]

The increased attention to domestic violence went beyond the news media. Women's groups were capitalizing on the O.J. Simpson allegations to draw attention to domestic violence as an issue, much as they used the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings to draw attention to sexual harassment.[6]

On the surface, then, the news media reacted to the O.J. Simpson allegations with increased coverage of domestic assault. But did this increased coverage of domestic assault affect the attitudes of the nation's gatekeepers? In other words, besides allowing more stories to pass through their "gates," did newspaper editors make changes either in newsroom policies or in their attitudes toward domestic assault?

This study looks at the policies, practices and perceptions that govern the way newspapers define news in relation to domestic violence. Specifically, it examines what kinds of formal or informal policies or style statements exist at daily newspapers to assist reporters and editors in handling such stories, and how newspaper editors perceive domestic assault and coverage of domestic assault. Data come from a national survey of newspaper editors conducted in the spring of 1995, during the O.J. Simpson trial.

In addition, the results of this survey will be compared with a similar survey conducted in 1990. Thus, this study will examine if editors at daily newspapers reacted to the allegations and increased attention generated about domestic violence by changing newsroom policy and/or their attitudes toward domestic assault.

This study is important for several reasons.

First, the news media have often been criticized for "manufacturing" the news[7] and for being "news shapers."[8] But the question remains: Can the news influence newsroom attitudes? In other words, do news editors adjust their policies and opinions in reaction to major news events?

Second, the results may offer insights into the news production process. Roschco[9] suggests that as a product of beat coverage, the press routinely concentrates its coverage upon some topics to the exclusion of others. The attitudes of the editors surveyed here may give some indication of why domestic assault has been under-reported through the years.

Last, and certainly not least, the topic of domestic assault is important for mass communication researchers. If domestic violence is indeed "America's dark little secret,"[10] editors' policies and attitudes toward this neglected issue are worthy of study.

Theoretical framework

For newspapers, covering domestic violence can present frustrating, often overwhelming choices: Where does domestic violence fit into the spectrum of crime stories confronted on a daily basis? Should it be handled as any other assault story?

Crime stories, of course, have long been an important part of newspaper coverage. Newspaper coverage of crime news also has long been an important area of research for mass communication scholars.

Several researchers have found no relationship between crime coverage and incidences of crime. For example, Autunes and Hurley[11] actually found an inverse relationship between the distribution of crime news in two Houston newspapers and the distribution of crimes reported to police. They argue that readers in Houston were given a distorted view of the realities of crime by the coverage that showed a higher crime risk than actually existed. However, the reverse of this argument also could be true. Because of the lack of coverage of domestic assault, the public may perceive less of a problem than actually exists.

Windhauser, Seiter and Winfree[12] found several changes in their comparison of crime news coverage in 1980 and 1985. They found newspapers in 1985 emphasized violent crime stories and provided more crime stories on their front pages. They also carried "crime-stopper" type stories and stories about driving under the influence more often in 1985.

Certain types of crime stories also receive more coverage than other types. Fishman and Weimann[13] found a sex-bias in crime reporting, in which male offenders and female victims were over-reported. Johnstone, Hawkins and Michener[14] found similar results in their examination of homicide reporting in two Chicago dailies. They also found that a homicide would more likely to be covered if there was more than one victim involved, and less likely to be covered if the victim was African-American or Hispanic.

Although many studies have examined the social creation of crime stories, few have explored the question of how newspapers approach the topic of domestic violence -- incidents which any police reporter is likely to encounter evidence of on a daily basis. The topic merits closer study for several reasons.

As Harlow[15] reports, domestic violence has been determined to be the single greatest cause of injury to American women. The Centers for Disease Control have called it a virtual epidemic. The U.S. Surgeon General has reported that for women, the home is statistically less safe than the streets.

The American Medical Association[16] has labeled family violence a public health menace, estimating that it affects one-fourth of all American families. In addition, the AMA believes it is responsible for no less than one-third of all female murders.

Yet despite the high instances of such cases, domestic assault has remained off the news media's agenda. The media's lack of coverage of domestic assault can have far-ranging effects.

Tuchman[17] has suggested the condemnation, trivialization or absence of women in mass media content can lead to "symbolic annihilation" in society's eyes. Therefore, by failing to routinely run stories on domestic violence, the media may unknowingly be sending a negative message to readers -- a message that domestic violence isn't important. At its worst, a newspaper's hesitancy to cover domestic assault communicates to its readers not only that the issue isn't perceived as a problem, but that it doesn't exist.

The role of newspapers in this process demands closer study. The limited research available on the reporting of domestic assault upholds the notion that the mass media can play a role in nurturing the creation and dissemination of society's perceptions about crime.[18] Through mass media, the average person can gain access to the nature and details of any number of criminal acts. The mere appearance and placement of a story within the news pages is, in itself, thought to offer strong social clues as to the relative weight and merit of a crime.

Sherizen[19] and other agenda-setting theorists argue that the mass media provide a distinctive social reality about crime. Sherizen concludes that the way crime acts are selected, treated and distributed through the mass media has the potential to influence both the informational level of readers and their understanding of crime.

This study asserts that, prior to the O.J. Simpson allegations, many newsrooms were uncomfortable, or at the least uncertain, about how to approach domestic violence as a news topic, as evidenced by a lack of formal or informal guidelines, policies or style rules that attempt to address the issue in day-to-day decision making -- anything that would acknowledge that domestic assault merits careful consideration as a news topic.

The O.J. Simpson trial, however, has drawn new attention to the issue of domestic violence, since domestic assault has been a recurring theme of coverage in the trial. Because of the extensive coverage of domestic violence throughout the trial, newspapers may have changed their way of thinking about this issue.

Method

Data come from a mail survey of newspaper editors. The survey involved a random sample of 400 national daily newspapers. Newspapers and addresses were randomly selected from the *1994 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook.*

The initial mailing took place in February of 1995 -- during the O.J. Simpson criminal trial. A reminder postcard was sent to newspapers two weeks after the first mailing. Four weeks after the initial mailing, a follow-up letter and another copy of the questionnaire were sent to those newspapers that had not responded. A total of 227 newspapers responded, for a 57 percent response rate, an acceptable rate, according to Babbie.[20]

The survey investigated several aspects of a newspaper's operation. Of concern here were several questions that dealt with domestic assault.

Two questions asked editors about the types of policies that newspapers had dealing with coverage of stories in general and coverage of domestic assault specifically. The first asked editors "Has your newsroom adopted a style book or formal polices to assist with day-to-day decisions regarding coverage of certain types of stories?" Editors were then asked "What kind of policy does your newspaper have on covering domestic assault cases -- cases in which a physical assault occurs in a home or residential setting between spouses, family members or boyfriend/girlfriend? Formal, Informal or None."

The first question was used as a baseline, to examine whether newspapers had implemented formal policies overall, regardless of their views of domestic assault. The second asked editors specifically about their newspapers' policies toward the coverage of domestic assault.

Next, editors were given a list of statements dealing with attitudes toward domestic assault and asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with each. The statements were :

* Publishing stories about domestic assault creates more problems for our newspaper than stories about other forms of assault.

* As an editor, I am usually less likely to publish a domestic assault story than I am to publish other types of assault stories.

* Running stories about domestic assault presents more legal risks for our newspaper than running stories involving other types of assault.

* Covering stories about domestic assault poses an invasion of privacy.

* Covering domestic assault cases tends to sensationalize a social problem.

All responses to the attitudinal questions were on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree." A neutral score, then, would be "3."

The data were then compared with data collected from a mail survey of all 147 daily newspapers in California, Oregon and Washington. Newspapers and addresses were extracted from the *1990 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook*. The initial mailing took place in February of 1990.

The 1990 survey used idential survey methodologies and asked identical questions dealing with coverage of domestic assault. A total of 87 newspapers responded in the 1990 survey, for a 59 percent response rate.

Since the first questions dealing with policies guiding coverage of stories produced nominal data, responses to these questions were compared through chi-squares. If newspaper editors had reacted to the O.J. Simpson coverage, editors in 1995 would respond that they had formal or informal guidelines for covering domestic violence more often than the editors in 1990.

Since the series of questions asking editors their opinions about domestic assault used Likert-type scales, and thus produced interval data, responses to these questions were compared through a series of T-tests. Thus, the T-tests examined whether the mean scores on these questions for the 1990 survey differed from the mean scores in 1995.

It should be noted that the two surveys used different sample populations and different sample sizes. The 1990 study surveyed only newspaper editors from the West Coast, while the 1995 study surveyed a larger, national population of editors. The West Coast newspapers, however, are extremely representative of the entire U.S. newspaper population -- with some of the largest newspapers in the country, such as the *Los Angeles Times,* and some of the smallest newspapers as well.

Indeed, the circulations of the newspapers responding in 1990 ranged from 1,000 to more than one million -- the same general range as the newspapers surveyed in 1995. A comparison of the responding newspapers also showed insignificant differences in circulation. Thus, this study should produce valid results.

Another potential problem for comparing the two surveys is the possibility of intervening historical factors. Obviously, the O.J. Simpson case was not the only domestic assault incident between 1990 and 1995. Other news events could have affected our results. Thus, generalizations about the results across the two time periods should be tempered.

Results

Table 1 lists the results of the responses dealing with newspaper policies. As the table shows, 68 percent of the editors responding to our survey in 1995 reported that they had formal policies. However, only 29 percent stated that they had formal policies regarding coverage of domestic assault. More than half the editors reported having informal policies. Thus, while two-thirds of the editors reported having some formal policies in the newsroom, less than one-third had formal policies for domestic assault coverage.

As Table 2 shows, editors in 1995 tended to agree with the statement that running stories about domestic assault presents more legal risks for their newspaper than other types of assault. The editors also tended to be split on the statement that publishing stories about domestic assault creates more problems than stories about other forms of assault. The mean for this question was 3.02.

The other three statements all produced means that were below the "neutral" response category. Editors tended to disagree with the statements that they are usually less likely to publish a domestic assault story than other types of assault stories, that covering stories about domestic assault poses an invasion of privacy, and that covering domestic assault cases tends to sensationalize a social problem.

Table 3 lists the results of the comparisons of the responses in the 1990 and 1995 surveys dealing with newspaper policies. As the table shows, the differences between the two surveys on both questions were not statistically significant. A higher percentage of editors surveyed during the O.J. Simpson trial did state that their newspapers had formal policies for covering domestic assault (29 percent compared to 20 percent of the editors responding to the 1990 survey), but this difference was not statistically significant. Thus, newspapers did not respond to the O.J. Simpson coverage by formalizing policies regarding domestic assault.

While newspapers in the two time periods did not differ on domestic assault policies, they did show statistically significant differences on three attitudinal items.

As Table 4 shows, during the O.J. Simpson trial, more editors tended to disagree with the statement that they would be less likely to publish a domestic assault story than other types of assault stories. The mean for the five-point Likert-type scale decreased from 3.19 in the 1990 survey to 2.66 in the 1995 survey (T = 6.55, p < .001). In other words, during the O.J. Simpson trial period, editors stated a stronger acceptance of domestic assault stories.

Editors in 1995 also were more likely to agree with two statements: that domestic assault presents more legal risks than other types of assault, and that covering domestic assault cases tends to sensationalize a social problem. The mean rose from 2.53 in 1990 to 3.25 in 1995 for the legal risk statement (T = 8.06, p < .001) and from 2.07 in 1990 to 2.21 in 1995 for the statement dealing with sensationalizing a social problem (T = 2.48, p < .05). Thus, editors surveyed during the O.J. Simpson trial showed a greater concern for the ramifications of domestic assault coverage.

Two statements showed no difference between the two time periods. Editors did not differ on the statements that publishing stories about domestic assault creates more problems than stories about other forms of assault (mean = 2.98 in 1990 and 3.02 in 1995), and that covering stories about domestic assault poses an invasion of privacy (mean = 2.21 in 1990 and 2.34 in 1995).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine newspaper editors' attitudes toward coverage of domestic assault and whether newspapers had implemented formal newsroom policies regarding domestic assault. Several generalizations from the results can be made.

First, editors apparently did not implement newsroom policies on domestic violence in reaction to the O.J. Simpson trial, since only 29 percent of the 227 newspapers responding reported that they had formal policies dealing with coverage of domestic violence. Indeed, this was further evident from an additional question asked in our survey. Editors were asked in what year their domestic assault coverage policy was first implemented. Of the 84 newspapers that named a year when their policies were implemented, only two said either 1994 or 1995. Thus, only two newspapers had implemented policies toward covering domestic assault during the time period of the O.J. Simpson criminal trial.

Two explanations why more newspapers did not initiate policies seem plausible.

First, newspapers may not have had enough time to implement newsroom policy changes in reaction to the O.J. Simpson trial. A major change in a newsroom policy obviously takes a considerable amount of time since these changes must go through several stages before implementation.

At the time of the 1995 survey, the Simpson trial was on-going. Some newspapers may have implemented formal policies on domestica assault since the conclusion of the trial. Others may implement formal policies at a later time.

Second, editors may be persisting in their beliefs that formal policies toward domestic assault are not necessary. Indeed, perhaps editors do not have formal policies on many types of stories. This explanation, however, was not supported from other data collected during our surveys. In the 1990 survey, editors were asked questions about their policies regarding stories dealing with simple assault and sexual assault. These questions were worded similarly to the domestic assault policies question. In both cases, more editors professed to have policies regarding coverage of simple assault ($X^2 = 30.61$, $p < .001$) and sexual assault ($X^2 = 6.505$, $p < .05$) than domestic assault. In addition, the majority of editors in the 1990 survey (59 percent) stated they had adopted some level of formal policies to assist with day-to-day decisions. The percentage was even larger in the 1995 survey (68 percent). In other words, editors did have formal policies dealing with other types of stories, but few of them had formal policies dealing with domestic assault -- only 20 percent in 1990 and 29 percent in 1995.

The editors' responses to questions dealing with their attitudes toward domestic violence coverage also reveal some concerns toward this issue.

Editors showed concern with the legal ramifications of covering domestic assault. Perhaps this concern is directly related to the fact that domestic violence is now being covered more often than in the past. Before the O.J. Simpson trial had thrust the issue onto the media's agenda, domestic assault received little coverage, so the coverage was not viewed as a serious legal risk -- it isn't a legal risk if it isn't covered. But now that domestic assault has been receiving increased coverage -- at least in the case of the O.J. Simpson trial -- editors apparently are concerned that the coverage may leave their newspapers open to legal challenges.

Editors in 1995 were evenly split on the question of whether domestic assault creates more problems than other forms of assault. The overall mean for this question was 3.02, or just over the "neutral" category (3.0). Thus, editors disagreed whether domestic assault was a problem for their reporters.

The disagreement between editors on this statement, however, could be due to the ambiguous wording of the statement. What types of problems can domestic assault stories create? Legal problems? Ethical problems? Logistical coverage problems? In other words, perhaps editors did not understand the purpose of the question.

On the other hand, a significant number of newspaper editors did agree with this statement. Apparently, many editors feel that domestic assault stories can be problematic.

Editors in 1995 also felt that domestic assault coverage did not sensationalize a social problem, and it did not pose an invasion of privacy. In other words, editors did not feel there was any ethical concerns with covering domestic assault.

Meanwhile, three of the attitudinal measures showed statistically significant results across the two time periods.

First, in the comparison of responses between the two surveys, editors in 1995 tended to disagree more often with the statement that they would be less likely to publish domestic assault stories than other types of assault stories. Here, then, is where the O.J. Simpson trial may have had its greatest effect. Apparently, newspapers now view domestic assault more like other assault stories, and therefore will be more likely to cover it than in the past.

Thus, the O.J. Simpson allegations may have served to bring domestic assault to the attention of editors -- so much so that editors are no longer viewing the issue with as much disdain as they had previously.

Second, while editors appear more likely to cover domestic assault stories, editors also claim that domestic assault stories present more legal risks. Again, this difference may be directly related to the fact that domestic violence is now being covered more often.

Finally, editors in 1995 also were more likely to believe that domestic assault stories tend to sensationalize a social problem. This difference between the two time periods may be due to editors' overall views of the O.J. Simpson trial. In other words, editors may believe that the overall coverage of the Simpson trial had been sensational. Thus, since the increase in coverage of domestic violence has been due to O.J. Simpson, and because of this connection between Simpson and domestic violence, domestic assault stories too may be viewed as being sensational. Editors, then, in their response to this statement, may not have differentiated between the issue of domestic violence and the event of the O.J. Simpson trial.

It should also be noted that editors' responses to the statement dealing with sensationalism of domestic assault were the lowest of any statement, with means of 2.07 in 1990 and 2.21 in 1995. Thus; while the editors in 1995 did tend to agree more often than editors in 1990 that domestic violence coverage tends to sensationalize a social topic, the scores for both surveys averaged in the "disagree" range of the measurement scale. Overall, editors in both surveys did not believe that domestic assault stories were overly sensational.

Equally revealing here are the two attitudinal measures that did not produce statistically significant differences. Editors during the O.J. Simpson trial did not state that publishing stories about domestic assault creates more problems for their newspaper than stories about other forms of assault, and editors also did not state that covering stories about domestic assault poses an invasion of privacy.

Taken as a whole, the results suggest that editors may revise their attitudes based on news events, but are reluctant to change policies for their entire newspaper. In other words, their opinions about the issue of domestic violence may have been modified because of the O.J. Simpson trial, but their actions were unchanged.

In their defense, newspapers are not a by-the-number business. In most newsrooms, decisions regarding the relative importance of a story and the play it will receive are made on a case-by-case basis each day. And news judgments are fickle. What would be front page news today might merit only a few inside paragraphs tomorrow. This study also does not try to suggest that newsrooms should be required to spell out exactly how reporters should do their jobs through the means of a formal, step-by-step manual of dos and don'ts.

But it can be argued that formal policies and guidelines communicate a stronger, more direct message to reporters than informal policies or no policies at all. As an institutional tool, a formal policy is a powerful means of sculpting daily news coverage. If explicit newsroom guidelines about how and when to cover some types of crime quietly lend credence to its coverage, the absence of that information also sends a message.

Table 1: *Editors' responses to newsroom policies questions.*

Do newspapers have formal policies to assist with day-to-day decisions that arise over stories?

Yes	68%
No	32%

Do newspapers have formal or informal policies regarding coverage of stories dealing with domestic assault?

Formal	29%
Informal	53%
None	18%

Table 2: *Editors' responses to questions dealing with domestic violence stories.*

	Mean
Running stories about domestic assault presents more legal risks for our newspaper than other types of assault.	3.25
Publishing stories about domestic assault creates more problems than stories about other forms of assault.	3.02
I am usually less likely to publish a domestic assault story than other types of assault stories.	2.66
Covering stories about domestic assault poses an invasion of privacy.	2.34
Covering domestic assault cases tends to sensationalize a social problem.	2.21

Table 3: *Comparison of newsroom policies in 1990 and 1995.*

Do newspapers have formal policies to assist with day-to-day decisions that arise over stories?

	1990	1995
Yes	59%	68%
No	41%	32%

$\chi 2 = 1.850, p > .05$

Do newspapers have formal or informal policies regarding coverage of stories dealing with domestic assault?

	1990	1995
Formal	20%	29%
Informal	62%	53%
None	18%	18%

$\chi 2 = 2.693, p > .05$

Table 4: *T-test results comparing responses from 1990 and 1995.*

	1990 Mean	**1995 Mean**	**T-score**
Running stories about domestic assault presents more legal risks for our newspaper other types of assault.	2.53	3.25	8.06***
Publishing stories about domestic assault creates more problems than stories about other forms of assault.	2.98	3.02	0.52
I am usually less likely to publish a domestic assault story than other types of assault stories.	3.19	2.66	6.55***
Covering stories about domestic assault poses an invasion of privacy.	2.21	2.34	1.85
Covering domestic assault cases tends to sensationalize a social problem.	2.07	2.21	2.48*

* -- $p < .05$
** -- $p < .01$
*** -- $p < .001$

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Sisyphus or Synergy:

Effects of TV-Newspaper Collaborations on Voter Knowledge

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Introduction

Collaboration is always a challenge. The intense competition that characterizes the news-business makes it difficult to coordinate news coverage between the two traditionally segregated cultures of television and print. Despite the challenges, several media-alliances, mostly in medium-sized markets, covered the 1996 election. Are such collaborative projects Sisyphean efforts, futile work with little or no impact, or do they produce a synergistic effect, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts? This paper analyzes a study of 20 U.S. markets as to whether collaboration between television stations and newspapers increased voter knowledge and thus may have had quantifiable effects.

When in recent years print-journalists and broadcasters decided to work together they usually did so for one of two reasons: a paper started or acquired a TV news channel or their organization was part of an election-coverage project. In the former case, where business considerations play a major role, cross-promotion between television and newspapers is considered an important asset (Criner and Wilson, 1996). This study focuses on the latter cases, where competing print- and broadcast outlets banded together as part of a Citizen-Based Journalism (CBJ) project. Here cross-promotion was regarded as an incentive, but not as the main focus of the project. (Poynter, 1996; Schaffer and Cloud, 1996) Instead, CBJ-projects focus on making a difference in the community they cover by improving political and social communication.

Sponsors of CBJ, like The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, Pew Charitable Trusts (where it is called Civic Journalism) or the Kettering Foundation (where it is called Public Journalism) encouraged cross-media partnerships in the coverage of elections in order to expand the reach of the projects. Although such coordinated coverage proved to posed daunting logistic challenges and added to the CBJ-culture-shock of some veterans of political reporting in both media camps (Clark, January 1997), most proponents of CBJ describe such media partnerships as a core element in this new journalistic approach (Poynter, 1996; Schaffer and Cloud, 1996). In fact, the proponents of CBJ describe partnerships as one of the defining characteristics of the otherwise often fuzzy concept of CBJ.

While the Pew Center for Civic Journalism strongly emphasizes the formation of media-partnerships in the projects it sponsors, its publications don't offer much explanation why the center promotes such teamwork. In a description of five media partnerships the only commentary on the reasons behind emphasizing cooperation is the assertion that "the total sum of our partnership was much greater than the sum of its parts" in the case of Iowa's Voice of the People project. (Schaffer and Cloud, 1996, p.8)

The Poynter Institute for Media Studies also cites partnerships as key elements in CBJ-projects and asserts, similar to Pew, that "working with other news organizations can give the coverage a broader reach" (Poynter 1996, p.1). The Florida non-profit is more specific in addressing possible benefits of media partnerships. It suggests four benefits: clout, cross-promotion, cost sharing and resource-sharing. Clout means that "candidates cannot easily ignore a media partnership that reaches a major share of the audience (...) in any important market. " Cross-promotion, they say, is a way to expand both newspaper readership and broadcast audience. Cost sharing for expensive polls, focus groups, forums, and town hall meetings helps keep expenses more reasonable. Sharing human and technological resources, Poynter suggests, can help make the project work better in ways the resources of a single organization could not. (Poynter 1996, pp.5/6)

Most of these benefits seem to be supported by Pew's and Poynter's case-studies (Civic Journalism, 1995; Schaffer and Cloud, 1996). Yet, the logistic challenges to a statewide cross-media partnership are substantial, according to Chuck Clark, government editor of the Charlotte Observer (Clark, January 1997). These challenges seem to offset some of the advantages of cost- and resource-sharing. It should also be clear that the cost-sharing aspect means sharing the *additional* expenses of a usually costly CBJ-project, such as polls, focus groups and the extra time for planning and research.

Media Synergy:

Any random sample of the U.S. population will show a strong correlation between political knowledge and newspaper-readership. This has been accepted far too readily as evidence of the superior ability of newspapers to deliver political information. The much poorer performance of television as a source for political information in correlational tests of effectiveness has often been interpreted as a failure of this medium to be of educational value to the American electorate.

Martinelli and Chaffee (1995) pointed out that the results of large-sample field surveys are often "quite ambiguous as to causal direction." Different levels of education have been shown to be related to different media-preferences, which produces correlations with use of that medium. These correlations, though, are an effect of the preexisting knowledge (or lack thereof), rather than its cause. (Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992)

Martinelli and Chaffee (1995) pointed to studies of political socialization that have found that television makes an important contribution to the process during which young people and recent immigrants develop an understanding of U.S. politics. Their study of newly naturalized citizens in California during the month preceding the 1988 election showed that self-reported attention to television news as well as to the newspaper are both good predictors of political knowledge, after controlling for class, income, education, English competency, time in U.S., interest in U.S. politics and intent to vote. They concluded that the relatively weak results for newspapers, compared to most surveys of indigenous adults, show that television plays a "bridging role" in immigrant political socialization (Martinelli and Chaffee, 1995, p25).

Martinelli and Chaffee (1995) also showed that of all media channels, the ability of the respondent to recall the content of a political television advertisement was clearly the best predictor for the respondent's political knowledge. It has to be noted, though, that this study examined a very specific population, recently naturalized immigrants, and the results are not therefore representative of the general U.S. population.

Werner and Drew (1995) examined a sample of 504 adult Indiana residents from Oct. 21 to Nov. 2, 1992, and found that television exposure was a better predictor of political knowledge than television attention or newspaper exposure, after controlling for education, income, age, gender employment and party affiliation. They also found that exposure or attention to talk shows, morning shows and debates did not qualify as predictors for the variable that measured knowledge of campaign-issues.

In their study of effects of news on the knowledge of readers and viewers, Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) reported that television plays a more important role in learning from news than a simple correlation of knowledge and media-exposure would suggest. They argued that "television's exciting, involving qualities and explanatory visuals break the attention barrier." This study showed that newspapers, in turn, have a much stronger learning effect, once the subject was interested in the issue.

Neuman *et al* (1992) also reported that high motivation can have a compensatory effect for the low cognitive skills of a subject. While cognitive ability is an advantage, motivation can compensate with respect to most non-technical public issues.

The results of Neuman *et al* (1992) indicate a complex relationship that goes beyond stereotypes about the relationship of knowledge and media-use.

> If television is particularly successful at breaking the attention barrier and getting people interested, and print media are particularly successful at providing the in-depth follow-up, then the relationship is synergistic rather than antagonistic. It

> might be that the political communication would be enhanced by a more self-conscious coordination between the print and the broadcast media. (Neuman, Just and Crigler, 1992, p93)

Thus, the synergy that seems to operate between television and print in shaping political knowledge in citizens suggests a distinct advantage of cross-media partnerships within one market, especially to convey complex socio-political issues.

Journalism has only recently begun to explore the concept of media synergy. Thorson, Walsh and Coyle (1996) point out that so far mostly persuasion theory, diffusion of innovation, and public communication have studied concepts similar to media-synergy.

Thorson *et al* (1996) pointed to a definition of media-synergy in marketing by Moriarty (1996, p.333):

> Synergy suggests that an entire structure of messages—with its links and repetition—creates impact beyond the power of any one message on its own and that this happens even in situations where there might be little attention paid to advertising.

While Moriarty (1996) explored the cognitive structure of media synergy as a means for concept development of a company or brand, Thorson *et al* (1996) studied synergetic effects of a multi-media public journalism project in Columbia, Missouri, in February and March 1994. The Thorson study (1996) reported that synergy operated in the combination of television viewing and newspaper reading, which was measured in effects on recognition of particular stories, better performance in knowledge questions, overall evaluation of the project and reported media cross-promotion.

Synergetic effects were also reported in an analysis of another CBJ-project, We the People/Wisconsin, conducted in 1994 by Denton and Thorson (1995). They reported knowledge and attitude effects by a "planned, coordinated, focused multimedia public-journalism effort." Yet, this study did not provide a quantitative analysis of such synergetic effects.

In a study of the process of media-supplementation, Schooler, Flora and Farquhar (1993) found a strong interaction of the use of media that raise attention and the use of print publications with in-depth information. In this study of the data from the Stanford Five-City Multifactor Risk Reduction Project, a 1979-1990 health-awareness campaign in northern California, Schooler *et al* developed a model for media-synergy, incorporating mediated interventions, interpersonal communication and audience responses.

The limited, but growing body of large-sample studies confirms the notion of Neuman *et al* (1992) that coordinated journalistic efforts of broadcast and print have a potential to enhance political communication and create a synergy where the whole is larger than the sum of its parts.

Method:

In order to evaluate media-partnerships critically, this paper examines data collected from 20 U.S. markets to answer the following two questions:

1. Is there any quantitative evidence of cross-promotional effects of media-partnerships?
2. Does political knowledge of citizens improve measurably due to media partnerships?

The second point is especially important because it touches on the very mission of CBJ, to improve the flow of information between politicians and the citizens.

The data were gathered by the Poynter Institute for Media Studies for a 1996 study of CBJ-projects. The Poynter Institute commissioned FGI of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to conduct two telephone-surveys, one before and one after the presidential election. These surveys sampled residents in the 20 U.S. markets in Table 1.

The first telephone-survey, August 1-11, collected data from a random sample of at least 50 residents of the 20 markets—altogether 1,027 interviews were conducted. The post-election telephone-survey, November 6-17, re-contacted a minimum of 30 people in each market and a fresh random sample of 407 residents as a control for interviewing effects. This time 1,030 interviews were conducted. The combination of these surveys produced a panel of 623 respondents who were interviewed during both times and a control group of 407 people who were only interviewed in November.

These two surveys were part of a larger study of CBJ-effects by Poynter and the University of North Carolina, which included mail-surveys to journalists at a major newspaper and a major television-station in each of the 20 markets and content analyses. Meyer and Potter (1997) explain why the sample of journalists for the mail-survey was not a random sample:

> Because we wished to study organizations as well as individuals, we needed to cluster our observations in a limited number of markets. (…) This purposive sample was designed to show variance. We wanted examples of both traditional and experimental coverage.

Based on the surveys of the journalists, Potter and Meyer defined a scale for "intent to practice Citizen-Based Journalism" for each organization and each market.

In seven of the 20 markets surveyed, media-partnerships between a TV-station and a newspaper were formed: Des Moines, Iowa; Portland, Maine; Portland, Ore.; Boston, Mass.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Raleigh, N.C. and Charlotte, N.C. (see Table 1). Six out of seven of the markets with partnerships were in the ten markets with the highest reported intent to practice CBJ by journalists. This high correlation of the two variables calls for care in the interpretation of any effects because they might be the result of either the partnership or the different newspaper content that resulted from high intent of the journalists to practice CBJ.

In order to examine the question whether such partnerships have cross-promotion effects between media and knowledge-increasing effects in citizens, this study focuses on the data gathered in the two random-sample telephone-surveys of residents of the 20 markets in August and November.

To probe the question of cross-promotion, the answers to two of the questions asked in both surveys were examined:

- "Has there been a time in the past 7 days when you looked in the newspaper to find out more about the some senate or presidential campaign development that you saw or heard about on TV?"
- "Has there been a time in the past 7 days when you looked at television to find out more about some senate or presidential campaign development that you saw or read about in the newspaper?"

Only respondents who reported exposure to TV-news and a newspaper in the last 7 days were asked these questions. A total of 375 respondents answered both questions at both times. This relatively small number is due to the selective nature of the question; only 391, or 63 percent of the 623-respondents panel reported that they used both media both times, as Table 2 shows. Still, Table 2 shows that the majority of adults in the 20 markets used both newspapers and television to follow the news, and they used both media consistently during the campaign.

In order to measure changes in the respondents' political knowledge three variables were combined into index variables for both surveys:

- "Which candidate said he wanted a $1,500 college tuition tax credit for middle class Americans?"
- "Which candidate supported a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. constitution?"

- "Which candidate wanted more restrictions on the purchase and possession of firearms?"

The correct answers were counted, which added up to a 0-3 scale for political knowledge for each respondent for August and November. This index of political knowledge was examined in two ways: paired samples t-tests and regression analyses.

First paired samples t-tests provided an understanding of the changes in the index between the August sample and the November sample for both types of markets. The t-tests also allowed an examination of the differences between the means of the index in the panel and in the control group.

In a second analysis, the index was entered as the dependent variable into a regression analysis. Several demographic variables were entered into the equation to account for the differences in political knowledge due to education, race and age. Then the partnership variable was entered as the independent variable. This equation was used for the August index and the November index.

Analysis

Cross promotion:

Crosstabs of media cross-promotion reported by markets with partnerships in November were controlled for media cross-promotion in August. In Table 3 the newspaper-to-TV analysis shows no significant difference between markets with partnership and the other markets.

Yet, the TV-to-newspaper crosstab in Table 4 shows a statistically significant (p=.029) Chi square of 4.45 for the group that contains respondents who reported in August that they checked the paper after seeing a campaign-report on TV. Within this group, a significantly higher portion in the markets with partnerships reported the same behavior during the November survey.

Thus, the data only indicate that joint coverage re-enforces the existing behavior of respondents who reported a TV-to-paper cross-promotion effect in August. The partnerships had no measurable effect on people who didn't report this effect the first time. Also, the partnership difference can only be measured for the TV-to-paper direction of cross-promotion, not for the paper-to-TV direction.

This finding is good news and bad news for newspapers hoping to partner with a TV station for a CBJ project. The good news is the prospect of tangible results from such a partnership for the newspaper: newspaper readership is encouraged. The bad news is that these figures provide little encouragement for TV stations to enter into such a partnership because cross-promotion appears to be a one-way street favoring newspapers. The promise of increases in readership or viewership could not be confirmed.

Yet, while readership and viewership development is certainly relevant, it is not too wise to overemphasize this issue. Much more relevant and interesting, especially for journalists involved in a CBJ-project, is the question whether the citizens gain anything from such partnerships.

Media Synergy and Political Knowledge:

An analysis of the data gathered by the two Poynter Institute surveys in August and November 1996 shows that political knowledge of the respondents improved more significantly in the markets where the television station and the newspaper formed partnerships to cover the election.

Tables 5 and 6 show an approximately normal distribution for both indices of political knowledge, although the November index is slightly skewed to the higher end. Table 7 shows that for political knowledge in November the difference between the means of markets with partnerships and the means of the other markets was greater than the difference for the same means in August.

In August, this difference was at borderline significance at the .05-level. In November the difference between the markets with partnerships and the other markets was significant at the .01-level. Part of this increase in significance may be caused by the larger N in November, but the difference in the means also increased by .02 points.

Another factor to be considered here is a problem of the panel-design of the surveys. In November the overall mean for political knowledge was .08 points higher than in August, but the mean within the panel was .17 points higher (Table 8). This shows that political knowledge increased during the campaign, but it also shows that it increased twice as much in the panel as in the entire sample. This is most likely an effect of the survey itself. It appears as if being asked the knowledge-questions in August raised the respondents' awareness of these issues during the campaign.

As Neuman *et al* (1992, p.102) showed, simply raising awareness or interest can cause a learning effect, which in our case offsets the effects of media synergy we are trying to measure. This kind of an effect is not unusual for a panel-design survey, and it is the reason for the control group in the design of this survey.

Table 8 shows that, while the overall mean for political knowledge improved, the difference between the markets with partnerships and the others didn't change at all within the panel. Yet, in the control group, the difference was .22 points, which is a 30 percent greater difference than in the panel in both November and August. The lower level of significance of this greater difference can be explained by the smaller N (407) in the control group. These complications make it necessary to select very carefully the groups of respondents that are going to be compared. There are two ways to examine the data for differences between markets with partnerships and other markets:

1) Comparing the August sample with the entire sample in November. Here we have to consider that the panel's heightened awareness to the questions dilutes these differences in the November group.
2) Comparing the August sample with the November control group. Here the N of the control group is too small to show statistically significant effects.

For this study, the first approach was selected because the larger sample size outweighs the disadvantage of diluting the effect.

Another reason for this choice is the different demographic profile of the control group compared to the panel. Education and Race are the two demographics that were recorded for both the panel and the control group. Tables 9, 10 and 11 show that the control group slightly oversampled minorities and that the panel is slightly better educated than the control group. The best way to avoid measuring differences that may be caused by demographic differences is to use a regression analysis, which permits controlling for race and education. The t-test shows an overall knowledge increase after the election. The test also indicates that the difference in the increase can be predicted by whether the media in the respondents' market were engaged in a partnership to cover the election. A combination of several regression analyses confirms the ability to predict different levels of learning by the presence of a media-partnership in the market. (Table 12)

A regression analysis with the August index for political knowledge as the dependent variable and markets with partnerships as an independent variable shows that whether or not a respondent lived in a market with a media-partnership had no significant effect on the political knowledge of the respondents in August. (Table 12)

A second regression with the November index for political knowledge as the dependent variable and partnerships as an independent variable shows that, in November, the partnership variable had a significant effect on the index of political knowledge (Table 13). Considering the differences in education and race between the markets with partnerships and other markets, these demographics were control-variables in both regression analyses. Like the difference in the analysis of the means, the difference in Table 12 is mainly the result of a difference between the panel in August and the control group in the November survey. The differences in learning the respondents in the panel might have experienced has been diminished by their heightened awareness due to the survey in August.

Besides the demographics, which are accounted for, the variable that measures the level of intent to practice Citizen-Based Journalism (CBJ) of the media in the markets of the sample might be a source of variance of political knowledge of the respondents. Meyer and Potter (1997) show that the intent to practice CBJ, measured in a survey of journalists in the markets that were sampled, strongly correlates with two aspects measured in content-analyses of these newspapers: the number of issues-stories (positive correlation) and the number of horse-race-poll stories (negative correlation).

This CBJ variable correlates strongly with the partnership variable, and there is a possibility that the different content of the papers in high-CBJ markets might have an effect on the political knowledge of the readers. The problem that presents itself is to differentiate the effect of the partnerships from the effect of the different newspaper content in high-CBJ markets. The effect of the newspaper content can be measured as the effect of the intent of new organizations to practice CBJ. Yet, due to the strong correlation of the partnership variable and the CBJ-variable, it is not possible to merely control for CBJ-intent in a regression and still get a statistically significant result.

A possible solution to this problem is to use the CBJ-intent variable as a predictor variable in the same equation used for the partnership variable, but without entering the partnership variable. If the CBJ-intent variable shows a distinctly different ability to predict the independent variable, political knowledge, then it is safe to conclude that the two variables are not measuring the same effect. Tables 13 shows the results of regression analyses with the political-knowledge variables as dependent variables and the CBJ variable as independent variable, controlling for the same demographics as in Table 12. Neither in August nor in November does the CBJ-variable show any significant effect on the political knowledge variable. Therefore we conclude that the effect measured in Table 12 is indeed the effect of the media-partnerships.

Conclusion

The results of this study clearly support the concept of media synergy through cooperation between print and television. The coordinated coverage of political and social issues by television and newspapers in seven of the 20 markets surveyed made a measurable difference in the markets they served. The respondents from these markets demonstrated more knowledge of the presidential campaigns and reported a limited cross-promotional effect. Although the intent of members of the media organizations in those markets to practice Citizen-Based Journalism has been shown to affect the content of these media (Meyer and Potter, 1997), the CBJ-intent variable was not a significant predictor for the differences in political knowledge in these markets in this analysis.[*] The synergy of newspaper-television partnerships affects the political knowledge of citizens in a given market much more strongly than the different style of coverage of high-CBJ media (i.e. less horse-race-polls and more issues coverage). That would explain why it has been difficult to show any relationship between the content of media that participate in CBJ-projects and the observed effects among the residents in these markets.

This analysis was able to confirm a conclusion of Neuman *et al* (1992) that "the political communication would be enhanced by a more self-conscious coordination between the print and the broadcast media" (Neuman *et al.* 1992, p93). Experiments like the Neuman study have a high degree of internal validity because they are conducted in a laboratory environment, where the researchers can minimize unrelated influences. Yet, such labsettings are often not very realistic and may lack external validity. The exact opposite is the case in random-sample surveys, which have high external validity, but where it is often difficult to separate different factors that may cause an effect. Therefore it is especially interesting to be able to confirm a conclusion that was based on experiments through an analysis of survey-data like this study.

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[*] Meyer and Potter (1997) find an effect on political knowledge when indiviual responses are aggregated by market and market is used as the unit of analysis. Resolution of this paradox is requires multi-level modeling, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

While the results of this study support the notion of a synergistic effect of media partnerships, great care has to be taken to ensure editorial independence of the partners to avoid fueling rumors of "media-conspiracies." Further case studies will be useful to develop guidelines for partnerships. Such guidelines will also be useful to bridge the gap between the different cultures of broadcast and print media and to help the partners navigate the potential minefield of a media-partnership.

However, combining the ability of broadcast media to draw attention to an issue with the ability of print media to cover an issue in-depth and to be a continuing reference could be put into the service of the public good. The added power of the partnerships to convey complex public policy issues or positions of candidates ought to be part of any strategy to improve political communication and strengthen the democratic process. Citizen-Based Journalism is such a strategy. Clearly, the promoters of CBJ have recognized the potential of partnerships to improve the democratic process. This study confirms that they are on the right track.

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Table 1

Markets, ranked by intent to do Citizen Based Journalism*

Markets with no partnerships	Partnership markets
4)Wichita, Kan.	1)Portland, Maine
6)Chicago, Ill.	2)Charlotte, N.C.
9)Norfolk, Va.	3)Raleigh, N.C.
10)Columbia, S.C.	5)Boston, Mass.
11)Austin, Texas	7)Minneapolis, Minn.
12)Rockford, Ill.	8)Portland, Ore.
14)Birmingham, Ala.	13)Des Moines, Iowa
15)Atlanta, Ga.	
16)New Orleans, La.	
17)Richmond, Va.	
18)Houston, Texas	
19)Little Rock, Ark.	
20)Grand Rapids, Minn.	

* according to Meyer and Potter (1997).

Table 2

Media use in November compared to August by Media-Partnerships		**No partnerships**	**partnerships**	
Both times TV and newspaper		61%	66%	63%
Both times neither TV nor newspaper		1%	0%	1%
Both times TV, no newspaper		5%	4%	5%
Both times newspaper, no TV		6%	7%	6%
Others		27%	23%	26%
TOTAL	Count	396	227	623
	percent	100%	100%	100%

Person Chi-Square= 5.346; df=5; p =.375 (2-sided)

Table 3

		No partners	Partnership	TOTAL
August: Checked TV after report in paper	November: Checked TV after report in paper	65%	63%	64%
	November: Didn't check TV after report in paper	35%	37%	36%
	TOTAL Pearson Chi-Square= .033 df=1, p= .479 (1-tailed)	100% (N=68)	100% (N=32)	N=100
August: Didn't check TV after report in paper	November: Checked TV after report in paper	36%	35%	36%
	November: Didn't check TV after report in paper	64%	65%	64%
	TOTAL Pearson Chi-Square= .033 df=1, p= .501 (1-tailed)	100% (N=166)	100% (N=114)	N=280

Table 4

		No partners	Partnership	TOTAL
August: Checked paper after TV report	November: Checked paper after TV report	60%	83%	68%
	November: Didn't check paper after TV report	40%	17%	32%
	TOTAL Pearson Chi-Square= 4.45; df=1, p=.029	100% (N=58)	100% (N=29)	N=87
August: Didn't check paper after TV report	November: Checked paper after TV report	38%	35%	36%
	November: Didn't check paper after TV report	62%	65%	64%
	TOTAL Pearson Chi-Square= .232 df=1, p= = .361 (1-tailed)	100% (N=173)	100% (N=115)	N=288

Table 5

No. of correct answers (out of three) in August	Frequency	Percent
0	119	19%
1	152	24%
2	199	32%
3	153	25%
TOTAL	623	100%

Table 6

No. of correct answers (out of three) in November	Frequency	Percent
0	172	17%
1	250	24%
2	324	32%
3	284	27%
TOTAL	1030	100%

Table 7

Independent Samples t-test		N	Mean	Mean difference	p-value (2-tailed)	Overall mean
August correct answers	No partnership	396	1.5581	-.1688	.054	1.6196
	Partnership	227	1.7269			
November correct answers	No partnership	664	1.6310	-.1914	.005	1.6990
	partnership	366	1.8224			

Table 8

Independent Samples t-test		N	Mean	Mean difference	p-value (2-tailed)	Overall mean
November correct answers:	No partnership	268	1.4813	-.2165	.044	1.5553
Control group	Partnership	139	1.6978			
November correct answers:	No partnership	396	1.7323	-.1664	.057	1.7929
Panel only	partnership	227	1.8987			

Table 9

Education	panel	control group
High School and less	26%	30%
Some College	30%	27%
College Degree	24%	26%
College plus	19%	17%
TOTAL	100%	100%
Race	panel	control group
Black	12%	17%
White	80%	74%
Other	7%	7%
refused	1%	2%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Table 10

Education of respondents in markets …	…with partnerships	…without partnerships
High School and less	23%	30%
Some College	30%	29%
College Degree	28%	23%
College plus	19%	18%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Chi-Square=6.537; df=3; df=1, p= .088 (2-sided)

Race of respondents in markets …	… with partnerships	… without partnerships
Black or other	16%	26%
White	84%	74%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Chi-Square=15.717; df=1; df=1, p=.000 (2-sided)

Table 11

Independent Samples t-test		N	Mean	Mean difference	p-value (2-tailed)
Age	No partnership	657	44.3760	-.8402	.416
	Partnership	364	43.5357		

Table 12

Regression	Dependent variable:			
	Correct answers in August		Correct answers in November	
	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
constant		.002		.553
Education	.351	.000	.234	.000
age	.079	.036	.002	.946
Race (white)	.087	.023	.121	.000
Partnerships	**.043**	**.255**	**.066**	**.029**

Table13

Regression	Dependent variable:			
	Correct answers in August		Correct answers in November	
	Beta	p-value	Beta	p-value
constant		.008		.578
Education	.341	.000	.228	.000
age	.084	.029	-.001	.977
Race (white)	.115	.003	.142	.000
CBJ-intent	**.020**	**.598**	**.055**	**.075**

A BIG ENOUGH WEB FOR THE BOTH OF US?

Online Coverage of the 1996 Election by Denver's Warring Newspapers

Presented to:

AEJMC Newspaper Division
1997 Annual Convention
Chicago, Illinois

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Online Coverage of the 1996 Election by Denver's Warring Newspapers

ABSTRACT

The *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News* have been fiercely at war for 100 years. Last fall, the two papers got their first shot at trying to outgun each other in online political coverage. This exploratory study analyzes the print and Web versions of the two papers during the campaign season to determine how they handled the opportunities and challenges of cyberspace; interviews with their online editors provide insight into why things were the way they were this time around.

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 100 years, the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* have been at each other's throats. The populist *News*, whose editor became legendary for fistfights with disgruntled readers, was already 33 years old when a group of bankers and industrialists raised enough money to start the *Post* in 1892. They shut it down for lack of support a year later, revived it in 1894, then sold it the following fall to the Wild West duo of Harry Tammen (whose previous experience in serving the public consisted of selling "authentic" souvenirs, made back East, to tourists from his Denver storefront) and Frederick Bonfils (who was on the lam because of a spot of trouble involving a land-lot sales scam).

The battle for Denver readers hasn't gotten much tamer since.

The 1990s version of the well-publicized circulation war in Denver has been described as a true showdown in the Rockies: just when it seems certain that one paper has won, the other suddenly ascends (Shepard, 1995). Denver is among only a handful of U.S. cities still served by two independent papers not under a Joint Operating Agreement. Readers of each newspaper are continually bombarded with both ads and news items declaring the paper they hold in their hands to be winning the circulation war and accusing the other of inflating its figures to stave off imminent and inevitable death. Although all the posturing makes reliable figures hard to come by, the *News*, owned by Scripps-Howard, reports a circulation of around 295,000 weekdays and 378,000 Sundays in the six-county Denver area where it is now concentrating its efforts ("Denver Post caught," 1997). The *Post*, part of Dean Singleton's Media News group, says it has an average daily circulation statewide of about 352,000, going up to around 472,000 on Sundays (Meyers, 1997).

Whatever the truth about the actual print circulation numbers, it is a fact that competition between the two papers entered a new arena in the mid-1990s: Both went online, the *Post* in late 1995 and the *News* in early 1996, just in time to greet the election year. Across the nation, the 1996 campaign was hailed as the first of the Web era, offering an inkling of whether the "electronic republic" envisioned by Grossman (1995) and others as redefining traditional roles of citizenship and leadership would become a reality. Prognosticators declared that a big election story would be how the Internet shaped the political landscape, as candidates, media outlets and members of the general public all began to reach critical mass online. "Competition -- from the Microsoft Network to the *Washington Post* -- will be fierce," one observer said back in January. "All are angling to be credible and authoritative voices in the sprawling, digital wilderness" (Houston, 1996, p. 26).

This exploratory study looks at coverage of the 1996 general election campaign and election results by both the print and online versions of the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*. In particular, it seeks to identify the scope and nature of coverage in both formats and to determine how the fierce battle in the streets of Denver translated into cyberspace during what is, for people in the news business, perhaps the most competitive of all seasons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is still too soon to definitively identify the Web's effect on the American electorate in 1996. After the 1992 campaign, there was a great deal of talk about candidates' use of nontraditional ways of reaching the public, from MTV to radio and TV talk shows; in retrospect, it appears that print and TV news continued to play a more potent role in the campaign than the newcomers (McLeod et. al, 1996; Weaver and

Drew, 1995). Diamond and Silverman may sum the situation up best when they suggest that "computer democracy spreads political communication farther and faster than ever before, but not deeper" (1995, p. 150).

But in 1992, "online newspapers" consisted almost solely of a few pioneers offering small-scale electronic versions either as stand-alone products or through such commercial services as Prodigy or America Online; they were very much still feeling their way, and their audience was, perhaps mercifully, minuscule. Studies that have sought to assess the impact of online information on the election, such as those conducted by Hollander (1995), have necessarily considered newspapers as separate and distinct from computer-based media forms rather than as contributors to them. Indeed, it is only very recently that researchers have begun to view the Internet as a "multifaceted mass medium" at all and to start to evolve conceptual and theoretical approaches for studying the 'Net and its audience (Morris and Ogan, 1996).

However, initial reactions to the much-anticipated Year of the Web indicate that, at least in terms of the electoral process, it wasn't. True, more than 800 commercial U.S. newspapers had ventured online by the end of 1996 (Editor & Publisher Online, 1997), along with hundreds of broadcast and cable TV networks and affiliates, dozens of specialized political information sites such as PoliticsNow and Project VoteSmart, and countless candidates from the presidential level down.

But surveys indicate most Americans either didn't know or didn't care. A Pew Research Center survey found only 3 percent of its respondents went online more than once a week for campaign information; a Media Studies Center survey found that only 6 percent **ever** visited a politically oriented site. "I don't think the 'Net culture played any role at all" in 1996, says *Wired* media critic Jon Katz. "The candidate who could have used it [Dole] didn't know about it. The candidate who knew about it [Clinton] didn't need it" (Jurkewitz, 1996, p. 54). Columbia University scholar John Pavlik suggests that the 1996 campaign season reflected a "latency" period, when forces were building but the "great tectonic shifts" in the political plate of the nation were not yet visible -- as, he predicted, they will be by 2000 (Pavlik, 1997).

In the meantime, newspapers did offer extensive online coverage of the '96 campaign, and they tried plenty of innovative things in the new medium. Examples range from a *New York Times* form for calculating what one's taxes would be under the Dole or Clinton plans (Hall, 1997), to a *Chicago Tribune* virtual tour of political conventions past and present (Harper, 1996), to a wide selection of political discussion forums, cyberballots, polls and databases. It's just that they seem to have been preaching mainly to the choir. Early analysis of Web users during the primary season, for instance, indicates the people who visited political sites were news junkies with a higher-than-average level of interest in the campaign anyway (Cybercampaigns Preach, 1996). Researchers continue to tally the effect of online political information on voters in the general election, but early returns indicate it may have been minimal.

Newspapers with Web sites are still too new a phenomenon to have generated much published research into the nature of online competition, but a considerable amount of work has been done, particularly by Lacy and his colleagues, on how a diversity of media voices affects the news product. The consensus seems to be that the more media outlets, the greater the diversity of content -- but only up to a point that lies within boundaries established by journalists' similar news judgments and publishers' similar financial constraints.

However, some researchers suggest the differences may be greater than previously supposed. Johnson and Wanta (1993), for example, examined three St. Louis newspapers (only two of which were in operation at any one time, and only one of which remains today) and found significant differences in the stories that editors chose to run. Of particular interest here is that the surviving paper, Pulitzer's *Post-Dispatch*, devoted almost a third of its news hole to political stories, running nearly twice as many political stories as its competitor during the study period in the mid-1980s.

But as Schudson (1995) and others have pointed out, there is considerable evidence that while the average citizen has access to more diverse sources of news than ever (for instance, satellite communication technology makes it possible to get daily editions of such papers as *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* almost anywhere in the country), control over that news is in the hands of fewer and fewer institutions. Information may come from more places, but it is often the same information in different packages.

Of particular relevance here are two studies recently published in Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly. First, Vermeer (1995) found that the presence of more newspapers in a county leads to closer election outcomes, especially in open-seat contests in which no incumbent is running (true of the 1996 U.S. Senate race to replace retiring Coloradan Hank Brown). In another study, Coulson and Lacy (1996) report that newspaper journalists -- who at most papers, including the *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News*, are responsible for producing Web site content -- believe competition promotes editorial diversity, competitiveness for stories and increased sensationalism. But as the authors suggest, the fact that hometown dailies are no longer seen as the only "real news" source for their communities creates fertile ground for research into the nature of intermedia competition. This study of how two competing papers used the Web to cover the 1996 election hopes to offer a step in that direction.

METHODOLOGY

Two complementary methods of data collection were used in this study. The primary method was a content analysis of both the print and online versions of the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* during three selected weeks in August, October and November 1996. The goal was to assess the scope of political coverage in each medium, so that they could be compared and contrasted. In addition, interviews were conducted, in person and by telephone, with the newsroom editors in charge of the online products at each of the two papers.

The three one-week periods during the general election campaign "season" selected for study -- each a Friday through a Thursday, partly in order to incorporate complete weekend coverage and partly for news reasons -- were not chosen at random. Rather, they encompassed dates that were especially relevant both nationally and locally:

Friday, August 16 through Thursday, August 22, 1996.

The Republican convention in San Diego ended on Thursday, Aug. 15, and the Democratic convention in Chicago opened Monday, Aug. 26. This week's coverage included Bob Dole's acceptance speech ending the GOP convention and his visit to Denver the day after the convention; it also incorporated the run-up to the Democratic gathering. More important to the Denver market, the Reform Party's unorthodox "convention" in Valley Forge, Pa., was held the weekend of Aug. 17. Former Colorado Gov. Dick Lamm was (unsuccessfully) challenging Ross Perot for the party's presidential nomination.

Friday, Oct. 11 through Thursday, Oct. 17.

This week was selected in order to incorporate coverage of President Clinton's visit to the Denver area and local campaign rally the weekend of Oct. 12, as well as stories before and after the second presidential debate on Wednesday, Oct. 16.

Friday, Nov. 1 through Thursday, Nov. 7.

This period surrounded Election Day, Nov. 5. It took in coverage of the final stages of the campaigns, including the last stormy debate between the candidates in Colorado's U.S. Senate race. Inclusion of the Wednesday and the Thursday papers after the election captured both election-night coverage and the day-after summaries and analyses that the two papers provided.

For each week, two sets of data were gathered. One set consisted of all U.S. election-related items in the local and national news sections of the early edition (delivered outside the metro area) of the print *Post* and *News*, plus political editorials, op-ed columns, cartoons and letters on the editorial and op-ed pages. These items were recorded and categorized using the coding sheet in Figure 1. In all, 774 election news items were identified and coded during the study's three weeks: 354 from the *Post* and 420 from the *News*. In addition, 89 editorials and op-ed columns, plus 34 editorial cartoons and 65 letters were identified and coded from the *Post*, as were another 89 editorials and columns, 46 cartoons and 61 letters from the *News*. The findings are described below.

The author did all the coding herself, so no intercoder reliability tests were necessary. Intracoder reliability was tested after all the coding was completed, by repeating the analysis of two randomly selected papers. Of the 21 items originally identified as political items in the Aug. 20 *News*, all but two -- a 1-inch brief about a dinner to benefit a state House candidate and an op-ed column about political leanings within the writer's family -- were so identified on the recount. No new items that had not been originally identified as political content were identified on the recount. The overall identification correlation was 90.5. All items were placed in the originally identified category on the recount, so the overall category correlation was perfect.

Of the 30 items originally identified as political items in the Oct. 17 *Post*, the other paper analyzed twice, all were identified on the recount, as well. No additional items were identified on the recount, so the identification correlation was perfect. All news items were placed in the originally identified category on the recount; one editorial and one op-ed piece were placed in different categories the second time around, for an overall category correlation of 93.3 percent.

For both recounts combined, the overall identification correlation was 96.1 percent; overall category correlation also was 96.1 percent.

The second set of data consisted of printouts of the home pages and the political content offered by the online versions of the *Post* and the *News*. The author accessed the online papers at roughly the same time during the afternoon of each day of the selected weeks. The *News* did not have a separate section for campaign coverage, so any relevant stories were simply printed out. The *Post* offered a "Colorado Campaign" section that included both daily updates and archives of previous stories; the day's new items plus the menus of archived material were printed.

In all, 116 election-related news items (not including links to other sites) were identified and printed out from the two online papers: 35 from the *News* and 81 from the *Post* (see Figures 2 and 3). Because almost all of these items also appeared in print, they were not individually coded in the same way. Rather, they were analyzed for any **differences** between the printed and online versions, such as changes in headlines or text. When the online version offered items that were not in the print paper -- such as the full text of the presidential debates linked from a story in the online *News* -- these were also noted.

Because of the transient nature of online content, it was not possible to perform reliability tests on this material to ascertain whether all political items had been identified when they appeared.

In addition to this analysis of the print and online products, interviews with *Post* and *News* journalists involved in the Web sites were conducted on Aug. 6 (face-to-face at each paper, taped); Oct. 18 (face-to-face at each paper, taped); Oct. 23 (by phone, with the *Post* online editor, who had been called away to a meeting during the author's visit on the 18th); Nov. 13 (by phone, *Post* online editor); and Nov. 20 (by phone, *News* editor). Notes and, where available, tapes of these interviews were transcribed and used to provide insights into the nature of competition, online and "offline," as well as the reasons behind decisions reflected in political coverage on the Web.

FINDINGS

Probably what is most immediately obvious is that the sheer volume of election-related information offered in the print papers dwarfed what was available online on any given day (see Figures 2 and 3). The goal of this study was not to detail differences between the broadsheet *Post* and the tabloid *News*, although the data do lend themselves to follow-up statistical analysis along those lines. But the raw numbers indicate that in print, the two competing papers were roughly comparable in their political coverage -- with the *News* taking a numerical edge attributable mainly to more short items about the presidential contest and a greater emphasis on Denver-area races, in line with the paper's marketing strategy of pulling back to circulate almost exclusively within the metro area. Such a finding would be in accordance with those suggested by Lacy and others, as mentioned above.

Online, however, the differences between the two papers were considerable, as were differences between each paper's own print and online versions. The *News*, which ran 616 political news and editorial-page items in print during the three selected weeks (not counting a 32-page pull-out Election Guide on Nov. 3, which contained 91 stories plus dozens of stand-alone infographics), ran just 35 election-related items online during the same period, or around 6 percent of the political content in the paper. The *Post* offered more online content -- 81 unique political items during the three weeks -- but still less than 15 percent of the 542 total news and editorial-page items related to politics in the print paper (see Figure 3; Figures 4 and 5 provide details).

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The reason for the difference between the two online versions was apparent from visits to the two newsrooms. A three-person team worked on the online *Post*: a former political reporter and long-time city editor who was in charge of the online service; a recent college journalism graduate who worked as a consultant, handling updates and helping develop new content; and, as of late September, an online advertising executive. At the *News*, the copy desk was given the task of updating the online service at some point in an already-busy evening; the person in charge of the online product was the deputy managing editor, whose main job was to get the printed paper off the floor every night.

"We're trying to do it with limited resources," said *News* Deputy M.E. Jack McElroy. "And in the Denver market, where you don't have a monopoly situation with the newspaper, resources are especially scarce and have to be devoted toward the primary objective, which is survival of the printed product." The *News'* philosophy was to use the Web to complement the print edition, so online content tended to have "shelf life" -- a recreation guide, entertainment information, background on the city's pro sports teams. "Politics is clearly an area that you want to get involved in. It's very central to what newspapers do. But some limitations that we've been faced with in terms of manpower and also equipment have not made that a primary area," he said. "We're trying to do as much as possible with as little as possible."

Although the *Post* at the time of this study had made a stronger commitment to its online product, resources also were scarce there. "We have not developed the type of depth that I would like to develop in original content for the political section. We still don't have the resources to do it," said New Media Editor Todd Engdahl. His wish list included, in addition to more staffers, the "bells and whistles" that would allow search functions, online forums, sample ballots and more.

In the meantime, the primary advantage over print that the *Post* offered those seeking political info online was an extensive archive of stories about the presidential, senate and congressional races in Colorado. A story might run on the *Post*'s home page or at the top of its online "Colorado Campaign" section the same day it appeared in print, then move to the appropriate archive spot, creating a running account of developments in key contests. "You have a depth you can't have with the newspaper unless you're an obsessive clipper and filer," Engdahl said.

Both the *Post* and *News* also offered hypertext links to additional material available online. The *Post*'s site included a standing section called "On the Net," with links to candidates' home pages, national political sites such as Politics Now, and sites offered by major news organizations such as CNN and *The New York Times*. However, the *Post* did not incorporate those links within its stories; users had to return to a menu page and work their way back down. At the *News*, links were more sporadic -- but when they **were** offered, they were associated with specific, related stories. For instance, the day after the second presidential debate, the *News* used an AP story, then ran links down the side to items ranging from the complete text of the first and second debates; Clinton and Dole home pages; a site offering audio from the debate; and another site that afforded opportunities for user participation in forums and polls.

But aside from such impossible-to-ignore news stories as the political conventions (to which both papers sent a reporter) and the debates, both the online *Post* and *News* focused almost exclusively on staff-written stories. In the print *Post*, election items during the selected weeks included 151 wire or syndicated news stories and 203 staff-generated items or stories written for the *Post* by correspondents or special contributors. Online, however, the *Post* ran only three wire or syndicated election news stories, compared with 78 staff-written items. Similarly, the *News* ran 189 wire and syndicate election items in its print editions during the study period and 231 staff-generated items. Online, it offered 29 staff stories and six from the wires. In addition, the op-ed pages of both print papers contained a mix of local and syndicated items (see Figure 6). Aside from an occasional op-ed column by a *Post* staffer, neither paper ran editorial or op-ed pieces online, as discussed further below.

The emphasis on local news online was deliberate. It stemmed from the notion of competition for the online user.

"The niche that we want to hold is to be the authoritative Denver online information resource," the *News'* McElroy said. "And so who's competing for that? Well, there are some of the local media. There's some start-up operations. There's some national -- AoL [America Online, which launched a Denver "Digital City" site in 1996] and Microsoft and such, who have designs on presenting local information.

"I would say as far as what we perceive the situation to be, the landscape to be right now, all of those are our competitors. If you get to the *Rocky Mountain News* online, is that the best single source whether you're local or you're dialing in from Timbuktu to find out what's going on in Denver in a useful way? That's a question we're trying to answer 'yes' to. So I think the competition is coming from a lot of different directions."

The guys down the block see things exactly the same way -- except they see themselves as that key authoritative source.

"Our competition is everybody and nobody," said the *Post's* Engdahl. Sites offered by the likes of Politics Now or CNN can handle national races. "The appeal of our election section is that it provides Colorado, or at least a slice of Colorado, with the news that may be hard for people to get elsewhere. Nobody else has as much stuff out there right now on the Internet about Colorado as we do. So if you're looking for Colorado things on the Internet, why, there's a place for you to go."

In other words, the print paper has a responsibility to provide as complete a picture of the world as possible because, especially in a competitive market such as Denver, it wants to be the only paper its readers see. Online, the rest of the world is just a click away. The online paper's purview need not be so all-encompassing; its niche is a local one. And its immediate concern, expressed by online executives at both papers, seems to be to protect its franchise in local information and local advertising -- not so much from the competing newspaper, also still feeling its way in this new medium, but from outsiders who are richer in technology and investment capital but poorer in their knowledge of and relationships among the local community.

The *Post*'s local emphasis also stemmed from the fact that it set up categories of election information online (Colorado Senate Race, Daily Congressional News, etc.); once they were established, it was confined mainly to running stories that fit within them. The Colorado emphasis was especially noticeable after the election. While the print papers carried full results of national races, along with local races in other states (notably California's ballot initiatives) that its editors found interesting, the online versions stayed close to home.

On Wednesday, Nov. 6, the *News* got 82 election-related items (stories, stand-alone photos and infographics) into the print news pages, of which 31 were about either the presidential outcome or races outside Colorado. Its online product for the same day carried just four political items: Results of Colorado's U.S. Senate race, state ballot initiatives and the Denver district attorney race, along with a column about future U.S. foreign policy by a staff columnist whose pieces regularly appeared online. The following day, the *News* ran 54 political items in the print news pages and three online: two local and the third, again on foreign affairs, from the same columnist. The *Post* ran 53 election-related news items (it used fewer stand-alone infographics) in the print paper on Nov. 6. It ran nine news items online, and all were local, including Colorado results in the presidential race. The next day, the *Post* ran 52 political news items in print, of which 11 local stories were available online; in addition, an op-ed column by the *Post*'s political editor was included online on Nov. 7.

Although both papers emphasized local political content, the *Post* -- with its separate online staff led by a former political reporter and city editor -- was more likely to edit stories for the online product. Of the 35 political stories that ran online in the *News* during the study period, only seven were noticeably different from their print version, other than combined or split paragraphs and alternate headlines stemming from variations in the "counts" available in the two formats. (For instance, an Aug. 17 print story about Dole's Denver visit carried a 4/54/1 headline that allowed room to say only "Dole rallies Denver faithful"; online, there was enough space to accommodate "Dole, Kemp thrill partisan crowd in Denver.") The few editing changes that were apparent consisted primarily of slight rewording and, now and then, omission of potentially problematic quotes or references; they may have been a result of the fact that what appeared online came from a different edition of the paper than the one the author, who lives outside the metro area, used in her analysis. In general, *News* editors did not seem to mess with reporters' copy in order to put it online.

At the *Post*, about 40 percent of the online stories -- 32 of the 81 -- did contain editing changes beyond simple things such as changing time references (in preparation for archiving the stories) or simply running paragraphs together (likely the result of a coding glitch, since some confusingly abrupt shifts in topic from one sentence to the next resulted). Again, some differences may be attributable to variation among print editions, but the changes were more frequent and substantial than would be expected as a result of that fact alone. They ranged from altered leads to deleted quotes to online typos not in the print copy to, now and then, a changed or dropped byline. Sometimes, extra background information was provided; other times, it was deleted. Occasionally, two or more stories were combined and reorganized.

Neither the *Post* nor the *News* editors said they had heard any complaints from reporters about the online products. Interest varied among individuals, they said, but newsroom reaction was generally favorable. Jen Griggs, who reports to Engdahl at the *Post*, said some political reporters had passed along positive feedback from sources about the site. At the *News*, McElroy said, "there's tremendous interest. More people would like to be actively involved than we can actually do."

Because the online editors at both the *Post* and the *News* got the stories after they already had been through the copy or city desk, they seldom took advantage of the lack of space limitations online by running stories longer than the printed versions. In the rare instances in which stories were longer online than in print, it was either because two or more stories had been merged into one or because additional background information had been inserted into the online version.

As mentioned above, the print and online headlines **did** differ because of varying counts. What's more, differently worded prompts led to the same story from different spots in the *Post*'s Web site. Because of the desire to allow users to access items from a variety of archival locations, a single story might have several pointers. For example, a story in the Oct. 13 online *Post* about Clinton's local rally at a popular outdoor concert venue carried this headline: "Confident Clinton campaigns at Red Rocks." The story was accessible from the main home page, where the headline read "The Prez packs 'em in at Red Rocks," the Colorado Campaign menu ("Clinton plays to friendly crowd"), the Campaign News menu ("Clinton returns to Colorado") and the Presidential Race in Colorado section within Campaign News ("Clinton plays Red Rocks"). A user thinking there were multiple online stories about the rally -- as there were in print -- could be in for a frustrating few minutes.

Another key difference between the online *Post* and *News* was their use of graphics. The online *Post* contained no photos; its main menus, including the home page and the Colorado Campaign page, offered standing logo-like graphics, but lower-level menus and stories were text only. If, as visual communication research suggests, images play a strong role in helping people evaluate and form opinions about political candidates, those cues were entirely lacking in the online *Post*.

The *News* always runs a large front-page photo or graphic, along with a series of refers to inside stories, and that format carried over to its online product: A large color news photo appeared online daily -- though the online photo was not always the same as the print photo. Of the 21 days included in this study, the online photo contained political content 11 times, compared with six times in print. Figure 7 compares front-page and home-page photos in the *News* during the selected weeks.

Finally, a few words about editorials. It has become axiomatic among Internet aficionados that this, at last, is a medium to fulfill the dream and the promise of a society resonating with a true multitude of voices. Editors at both the *News* and the *Post* expressed regret that the technology available to them did not allow creation of discussion forums and other interactive structures that would enable the sort of citizen involvement in the electoral process that is a key aspect of the civic journalism movement. They simply did not have the resources to begin to build a structure that allows "a collection of views (to) be archived, reread, explored and connected in new ways that offer new models of problem solving that expand the narrative boundaries of traditional journalism" (Friedland, 1996, p. 202).

However, neither paper provided even the diversity of voices readily available in print through editorials, op-ed columns and letters to the editor. During the three selected weeks, the print *Post* ran 89 editorials and columns, 34 cartoons and 65 letters to the editor related to politics; the print *News* also ran 89 editorials and columns, plus 46 cartoons and 61 letters. None of the *News* items ran online although staff columns that run in the news pages did appear. The online *Post* ran its editorial endorsements in November; four political columns, written by staffers, that ran on the paper's op-ed pages also appeared online in the selected weeks. Otherwise, it also ignored the wealth of opinions available to it from around the city, state and nation.

Understandably, there is a need to be selective in allocating what resources are available, and, as the *News'* McElroy put it, "politics is a big bite to start chewing." In terms of their political content this time around, both papers made the same decision about what was most palatable: the same local, primarily textual content, and the same one-way communication from newspaper to reader, offered in print.

DISCUSSION

For the most part, then, what both Denver papers offered online during the 1996 general election season was a small subset of what was available in print. It is worth noting that at the time of this study, the online products at both the *Post* and the *News* were not even a year old, and both have since benefitted from major makeovers.

At the *News*, the online product has been moved off the copy desk and a separate staff hired to produce a far more robust daily product than was available through the November election. It currently offers an online discussion forum, access to the Associated Press wire, and extensive local news stories and archives. The *Post*'s online product remains geographically and psychologically situated within the newsroom, but it, too, has been revamped and expanded. It now includes a search function of some sections (notably entertainment and classified ads), a News You Can Use section with topics ranging from recycling locations to an astronomical calendar, and, like the *News*, access to the AP wire.

In fact, they are far more similar now, in both "look" and content, than they were in the fall of 1996. Then, it was fairly easy for each side to point to the other and claim it was going about things all wrong: *Post* staffers belittled the *News* for failing to provide regularly updated information in major areas such as politics, and the *News*' McElroy belittled the *Post* for not going for a "useful, complete guide to the city type of approach." Those disparagements are no longer valid.

And so while the challenge from outsiders, from computer giants to telephone companies, has certainly not gone away, the direct online competition among the people who have been going head to head in print for 100 years also has become stronger. The papers' online executives are right when they identify their strength as the experience and reputation gained through generations of covering, and being a part of, their city. But both the *News* and the *Post* have a comparable knowledge of Denver and long-term relationships with its people and institutions.

In 1996, those at both papers believed the to-the-death competition between their print products did not extend to the Web. On the contrary, they saw that struggle for survival as sapping resources that might otherwise be used to create a decisively superior online product. "It's harder in a competitive market because a lot of the focus is still on the print competition and not the online competition," the *Post's* Griggs said. McElroy at the *News* said papers not in a head-to-head market struggle can afford to fund an online product in order to maintain stature. But he pointed to the brutal Detroit battle between Gannett and Knight-Ridder as a warning to the wise:

> For a while, they threw as much money as they could at it. I think that Denver may have learned or took some lessons from what happened there. We've not seen either side here willing to say, 'Well, we're just going to drive you out of business by throwing everything we have at it.' Instead, it's been, 'We're going to be more lean and mean than you are.' And so that doesn't leave any room for, or very much room for, unnecessary extras.

And, as always, there are other factors, too -- factors that merit both further study in the academy and further consideration in the newsroom. There's the little matter of the Newspaper Guild, for one. Although Colorado is a right-to-work state, staffers at both the *News* and the *Post* have Guild representation. During the 1996 election season, Guild copy editors at the *News* worked outside their contract to maintain the online product; the *Post* avoided the problem by hiring a consultant as its only non-management online staffer. In general, union concerns about staffing of Web products are still being dealt with largely on a case-by-case basis, and how it all shakes out remains to be seen.

There is also the issue of competition from sources besides the other newspaper in town. Most regional papers such as the *Post* and the *News* now offer links from their own Web sites to those of larger news organizations with either more comprehensive or more specialized content -- a recognition, perhaps, that their own role and niche on the Web can be fairly narrowly defined because of the instant accessibility of other information sources within the same medium. The changing concept of just who is a competing information source online deserves more study.

In 1996, national and local TV coverage remained a major factor in the minds of *News* and *Post* editors, notably on election night -- not so much online (though the Denver affiliates do have sites), but because of TV's ability to provide up-to-the-minute results without the hassle of Web traffic jams and a constant click-click-clicking for fresh facts. "I've always felt, and I still feel, from a media point of view, election night is television's night," the *Post's* Engdahl said. "It's hard for anybody else to compete with them." McElroy agreed. "Rather than the returns, it may be that the leading up to the returns and providing avenues for debate and such may be a more central role" online, he said. "Involvement in the campaign more than the election."

A newspaper's online service, then, is a natural venue for extending and expanding the service provided in print: Seeking to help citizens learn not just about what is going on but also about the part they themselves play in the democratic process. The implications of this exploratory study extend well beyond Denver. True, other fiercely competing papers around the country face similar questions of how to balance the need to maintain their print products with the desire to establish a credible presence in a new media environment. But at a broader level, this look at how the *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News* handled their first campaign-season ventures into cyberspace provides evidence for a number of conclusions.

One is that if newspapers are serious about being citizens of the online community and are ready to go beyond merely hedging their bets to protect their advertising base, management must take seriously the need for resources that allow the new medium's promise to be fulfilled. The Internet does offer an opportunity to consider politics from bottom up as well as top down, in an effort to "help make modern deliberative democracy work better than it does today" (Grossman, 1995, p. 242).

Simply offering the same material in bits instead of atoms does nothing to further that effort, as *Post* and *News* editors noted in identifying their own weaknesses; to go beyond "shovelware" demands a commitment of human, technical and, therefore, financial resources.

Clear thinking also is needed about who the newspaper's audience is online and what that audience might expect. Both McElroy and Engdahl said expectations in 1996 were too high to be met: People wanted the Web product to do everything they envisioned it as **capable** of doing, an impossibility even with far more resources than were available. Papers in a competitive market may have a clearer sense of their appeal than those whose monopoly status affords them the luxury of some complacency. But for any paper venturing online, a key question is what they bring to a party whose attendees come from all over the globe. Both the *News* and the *Post* see their strength as knowledge of their own community and their users as people interested in that community -- yet both also offer online windows to a broader world of credible political content than their own newspapers can ever afford to provide. Product changes since this study was conducted have continued that outward expansion.

A diversity of voices in cyberspace **is** desirable -- and that means a diversity of media voices, too. As the babble increases, so too does the need for people skilled at making sense out of it, at bringing coherence to the clamor. Both the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Post* helped some semblance of order emerge out of the chaos of the old frontier. The need for their services remains strong on the new one.

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Denver Newspapers

FIGURE 1

PAPER and DATE: ______________________________

PAGE: ________ PAGE HEADER? ______________________________

HEADLINE COUNT: ______________________________

TEXT: ______________________________

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DECK COUNT: ______________________________

TEXT: ______________________________

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PAGE LOCATION: ______________________________

SOURCE: ______________________________

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PHOTO? Size: ______________________________ Color? ________

Source: ______________________________

Topic: ______________________________

CARTOON? Size: ______________________________ Color? ________

Source: ______________________________

Topic: ______________________________

LENGTH: ____________ picas (____________ inches)

INCLUDING INSETS? ____________

BASTARD MEASURE? ____________

JUMP? To page: ______________________ (see that page for details)

JUMP LENGTH: ____________ picas (____________ inches)

TOTAL LENGTH: ____________ picas (____________ inches)

MIXED MEASURES? ____________

CATEGORY: ______________________________

FIGURE 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS IN SAMPLE WEEKS

The numbers reflect news items that appeared during the selected periods, not previously archived material. Each item was counted only once, on the day it appeared.

Figure 3 offers more details.

	AUGUST	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	TOTAL
PRINTED POST	49	92	213	354
ONLINE POST	13	20	43	76[1]
PRINTED NEWS	79	94	247[2]	420
ONLINE NEWS	11	12	12	35

[1] In addition, the online *Post* ran four op-ed columns, written by the paper's staffers, during the three weeks; it also ran its own editorial endorsements, beginning Nov. 3. Those five items bring the total number of online items to 81.

[2] The *News* also ran a 32-page pull-out Election Guide as part of its Sunday, Nov. 3, paper. The *Post's* Election Guide ran during a week not included in this study; the number above does not include stories in the *News'* Election Guide because their inclusion would create an inaccurate impression of the comparability of coverage by the two papers. As a point of information, the *News'* guide contained 91 stories, consisting primarily of candidate profiles and answers to questions about their stands on various issues; and 29 infographics, such as maps of Colorado's congressional districts, boxed descriptions of contested offices and a sample ballot.

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FIGURE 3: DETAILS OF POLITICAL ITEMS IN PRINT AND ONLINE PAPERS

Counts reflect news items first, followed by editorial-page items (editorials, op-ed columns, cartoons, letters) after the slash. Archived items are counted only on the day they first appear.

DATE	PRINT POST	ONLINE POST	PRINT NEWS	ONLINE NEWS
Aug. 16	13 / 11	4[1]/ --	14 / 5	4 / --
Aug. 17	5 / 7	3 / --	11 / 5	2 / --
Aug. 18	9 / 9	2 / 1	17 / 14	1 / --
Aug. 19	6 / 4	2 / --	6 / 7	3 / --
Aug. 20	5 / 10	--	13 / 8	1 / --
Aug. 21	4 / 6	2 / 1	9 / 10	--
Aug. 22	7 / 6	--	9 / 6	--
Oct. 11	24 / 8	5 / --	11 / 8	--
Oct. 12	6 / 4	2 / --	12 / 4	1 / --
Oct. 13	14 / 16	1 / --	20 / 15	2 / --
Oct. 14	8 / 2	1[1] / --	9 / 7	4 / --
Oct. 15	7 / 8	1 / --	9 / 11	1 / --
Oct. 16	14 / 6	7 / --	18 / 9	--
Oct. 17	19 / 11	3[1] / --	15 / 9	4 / --
Nov. 1	32 / 15	6 / --	34 / 11	--[2]
Nov. 2	17 / 11	6 / --	26 / 8	--[2]
Nov. 3	29 / 24	5 / 1[3]	28 / 36	1 / --
Nov. 4	13 / 4	6 / 1	15 / 5	3 / --
Nov. 5	17 / 7	--	8 / 6	1 / --
Nov. 6	53 / 9	9[1]	82 / 4	4 / --
Nov. 7	52 / 10	11[1] / 1	54 / 8	3 / --
TOTALS	354 / 188	76 / 5	420 / 196	35 / --

[1] Two print stories were combined into one online story in the *Post* on Aug. 16, Oct. 14, Oct. 17 and Nov. 7. On Nov. 6, 14 print items were merged into nine online items.

[2] The online *News* apparently was not updated on Nov. 1 or 2.

[3] The *Post* began running its endorsements online on Nov. 3.

Denver Newspapers

FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS BY CATEGORY AND LENGTH IN PICAS
PRINT DENVER POST

In the November column, the first number reflects pre-election items and the second number reflects post-election items, including results.

"Graphics" reflect stand-alone photos and stand-alone infographics; graphics accompanying stories were tallied with those stories. Infographics were used mainly for vote tallies.

	AUGUST	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	TOTAL
PRESIDENT (Including vice president)				
Under 50 picas	10	14	9 / 3	36
50.5 to 100	25	21	11 / 5	62
100.5 and over	10	13	9 / 4	36
Graphics	1	2	2 / 4	9
			TOTAL PRESIDENT:	143
U.S. SENATE (Colorado)				
Under 50 picas	--	1	2 / --	3
50.5 to 100	1	5	5 / 2	13
100.5 and over	--	--	2 / --	2
Graphics	--	--	2 / 2	4
			TOTAL U.S. SENATE:	22
U.S. HOUSE (Colorado)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	1 / --	1
50.5 to 100	--	2	2 / 4	8
100.5 and over	--	1	1 / 1	3
Graphics	--	--	2 / 13	15
			TOTAL U.S. HOUSE:	27
U.S. CONGRESS (Colorado delegation as a whole, plus nationwide)				
Under 50 picas	--	1	--	1
50.5 to 100	--	4	-- / 1	5
100.5 and over	--	1	-- / 2	3
Graphics	--	--	1 / --	1
			TOTAL U.S. CONGRESS:	10
COLORADO STATE SENATE				
Under 50 picas	--	--	1 / --	1
50.5 to 100	--	--	--	--
100.5 and over	--	1	1 / 1	3
Graphics	--	--	-- / 1	1
			TOTAL STATE SENATE:	5
COLORADO STATE HOUSE				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	1	1 / --	2
100.5 and over	--	2	1 / --	3
Graphics	--	--	-- / 2	2
			TOTAL STATE HOUSE:	7
COLORADO STATE BALLOT ISSUES (Amendments, referenda)				
Under 50 picas	1	--	1 / --	2
50.5 to 100	--	2	2 / 3	7
100.5 and over	--	1	2 / 1	4
Graphics	--	--	-- / 1	1
			TOTAL BALLOT ISSUES:	14
DENVER (Primarily district attorney race)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	1 / --	1
50.5 to 100	--	2	1 / 3	6
100.5 and over	--	--	1 / --	1
Graphics	--	--	- / 1	1
			TOTAL DENVER:	9
LOCAL (Communities outside Denver)				
Under 50 picas	--	2	--	2
50.5 to 100	--	--	1 / 14	15
100.5 and over	--	1	1 / 1	3
Graphics	--	--	-- / 1	1
			TOTAL LOCAL:	21

FIGURE 4, continued

	AUGUST	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	TOTAL
OUT OF STATE (Races in other states)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	9 / --	9
50.5 to 100	--	4	3 / 1	8
100.5 and over	--	4	3 / 0	7
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL OUT OF STATE:	24
VOTERS				
Under 50 picas	--	--	6 / --	6
50.5 to 100	--	5	9 / 2	16
100.5 and over	--	1	7 / 1	9
Graphics	--	--	7 / 1	8
			TOTAL VOTERS:	39
BOARD OF EDUCATION and UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO REGENTS				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	--	-- / 3	3
100.5 and over	--	--	--	--
Graphics	--	--	-- / 4	4
			TOTAL EDUCATION:	7
STATEWIDE (Post-election items about Colorado results in general)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	--	-- / 2	2
100.5 and over	--	--	-- / 5	5
Graphics	--	--	-- / 2	2
			TOTAL STATEWIDE:	9
MEDIA (Items related specifically to media coverage or media use)				
Under 50 picas	--	1	1 / --	2
50.5 to 100	--	--	1 / 1	2
100.5 and over	--	--	--	--
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL MEDIA:	4
MISCELLANEOUS (Items re political process, parties, candidates)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	--	2 / 5	7
100.5 and over	1	--	4 / 1	6
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS:	13

TOTAL POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS IN PRINTED POST during selected weeks: 354

FIGURE 5: NUMBER OF POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS BY CATEGORY AND LENGTH IN PICAS
PRINT ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

In the November column, the first number reflects pre-election items and the second number reflects post-election items, including results.

"Graphics" reflect stand-alone photos and stand-alone infographics; graphics accompanying stories were tallied with those stories. Infographics were used mainly for vote tallies.

	AUGUST	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	TOTAL
PRESIDENT (Including vice president)				
Under 50 picas	32	14	16 / 3	65
50.5 to 100	26	25	19 / 16	86
100.5 and over	5	3	8 / 2	18
Graphics	--	--	2 / 12	14
			TOTAL PRESIDENT:	183
U.S. SENATE (Colorado)				
Under 50 picas	1	3	1 / --	5
50.5 to 100	2	6	4 / --	12
100.5 and over	--	3	4 / 1	8
Graphics	--	--	-- / 4	4
			TOTAL U.S. SENATE:	29
U.S. HOUSE (Colorado)				
Under 50 picas	1	1	-- / 5	7
50.5 to 100	--	3	4 / 2	9
100.5 and over	--	2	--	2
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL U.S. HOUSE:	18
U.S. CONGRESS (Colorado delegation as a whole, plus nationwide)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	3 / --	3
50.5 to 100	1	--	2 / 3	6
100.5 and over	--	1	2 / --	3
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL U.S. CONGRESS:	12
COLORADO STATE SENATE				
Under 50 picas	1	--	1 / --	2
50.5 to 100	--	--	2 / --	2
100.5 and over	--	--	-- / 1	1
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL STATE SENATE:	5
COLORADO STATE HOUSE				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	2	--	2
100.5 and over	--	--	-- / 2	2
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL STATE HOUSE:	4
COLORADO STATE BALLOT ISSUES (Amendments, referenda)				
Under 50 picas	--	2	2 / 1	5
50.5 to 100	1	--	8 / 12	21
100.5 and over	--	--	-- / 2	2
Graphics	--	--	-- / 1	1
			TOTAL BALLOT ISSUES:	29
DENVER (Primarily district attorney race)				
Under 50 picas	1	1	2 / --	4
50.5 to 100	1	6	3 / 5	15
100.5 and over	--	2	2 / --	4
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL DENVER:	23
LOCAL (Communities outside Denver)				
Under 50 picas	2	--	2 / 6	10
50.5 to 100	3	3	4 / 12	22
100.5 and over	--	4	2 / 2	8
Graphics	--	--	-- / 1	1
			TOTAL LOCAL:	41

FIGURE 5, continued

	AUGUST	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	TOTAL
OUT OF STATE (Races in other states)				
Under 50 picas	--	4	2 / 2	8
50.5 to 100	1	--	4 / 4	9
100.5 and over	--	--	--	--
Graphics	--	--	-- / 1	1
			TOTAL OUT OF STATE:	18
VOTERS				
Under 50 picas	--	5	2 / --	7
50.5 to 100	--	1	13 / 5	19
100.5 and over	--	1	2 / 2	5
Graphics	--	--	1 / --	1
			TOTAL VOTERS:	32
BOARD OF EDUCATION and UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO REGENTS				
Under 50 picas	--	--	-- / 1	1
50.5 to 100	--	--	-- / 1	1
100.5 and over	--	--	-- / 1	1
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL EDUCATION:	3
STATEWIDE (Post-election items about Colorado results in general)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	1	1 / 1	3
100.5 and over	--	--	-- / 2	2
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL STATEWIDE:	5
MEDIA (Items related specifically to media coverage or media use)				
Under 50 picas	--	--	--	--
50.5 to 100	--	--	-- / 3	3
100.5 and over	--	--	--	--
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL MEDIA:	3
MISCELLANEOUS (Items re political process, parties, candidates)				
Under 50 picas	--	1	1 / 2	4
50.5 to 100	--	--	-- / 4	4
100.5 and over	1	--	1 / 5	7
Graphics	--	--	--	--
			TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS:	15

TOTAL POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS IN PRINTED NEWS during selected weeks: 420

FIGURE 6: SOURCES OF POLITICAL NEWS ITEMS

	AUGUST	**OCTOBER**	**NOVEMBER**	**TOTAL**
PRINT POST				
STAFF	22[1]	52[1]	129[2]	203
WIRE	27	40	84	151
ONLINE POST				
STAFF	13[3]	19	46[4]	78
WIRE	2	1	--	3
PRINT NEWS				
STAFF	32[1]	55	144	231
WIRE	47	39	103	189
ONLINE NEWS				
STAFF	9	8	12	29
WIRE	2	4	--	6

[1] Includes one story from staff and wire services

[2] Includes three stories from staff and wire services

[3] Includes one item from staff and wire services and two op-ed columns

[4] Includes two items from staff and wire services, two op-ed columns and the *Post's* endorsements.

During the selected weeks, the print *Post* also ran 53 editorial-page items written by staff or local contributors, including unsigned editorials and staff cartoons; it ran 70 syndicated columns and cartoons. All letters to the editor were local.

During the same weeks, the print *News* ran 58 editorial-page items written by staff or local contributors, including unsigned editorials and staff cartoons; it ran 77 syndicated columns and cartoons. All letters to the editor were local.

FIGURE 7: COLOR PHOTOS ON PRINT FRONT PAGE AND ONLINE HOME PAGE, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

* **Aug. 16 Print**: Bob and Elizabeth Dole at convention
Aug. 16 Online: Bob and Elizabeth Dole at convention

* **Aug. 17 Print**: Dole and Kemp at Denver rally
Aug. 17 Online: Dole and Kemp at Denver rally

* **Aug. 18 Print**: Local students who earned straight As
Aug. 18 Online: Broncos pre-season football action

* **Aug. 19 Print**: Golfer at local tournament
Aug. 19 Online: Dick Lamm being consoled by his daughter

* **Aug. 20 Print**: Dedication of astronomical observatory
Aug. 20 Online: Dedication of astronomical observatory

* **Aug. 21 Print**: Wildfire threatens Mesa Verde
Aug. 21 Online: Denver archbishop called to Rome

* **Aug. 22 Print**: Jefferson County schools start classes
Aug. 22 Online: Rain ads firefighters at Mesa Verde

* **Oct. 11 Print**: Preparation for Imperial Tombs of China exhibit
Oct. 11 Online: Preparation for Imperial Tombs of China exhibit

* **Oct. 12 Print**: Boaters, sunbathers at local reservoir
Oct. 12 Online: U.S. Senate candidates at debate

* **Oct. 13 Print**: Logo for four-day "Divided We Stand series
Oct. 13 Online: President Clinton and local Democrats

* **Oct. 14 Print**: Clinton with local churchgoers
Oct. 14 Online: Clinton with local churchgoers

* **Oct. 15 Print**: Boy in pumpkin patch
Oct. 15 Online: Boy in pumpkin patch

* **Oct. 16 Print**: Snow-making machine at Loveland resort
Oct. 16 Online: Snow-making machine at Loveland resort

* **Oct. 17 Print**: Dole and Clinton
Oct. 17 Online: Bruce Springsteen, plus two mugs: Dole, Clinton

* **Nov. 1 Print**: Local girls bob for doughnuts
Nov. 1 Online: Clinton and Denver Mayor Wellington Webb

* **Nov. 2 Print**: Skier at Eldora ski resort
Nov. 2 Online: Clinton and Webb again (no overnight update)

* **Nov. 3 Print**: Visitors inspect museum exhibit items
Nov. 3 Online: University of Colorado football action

* **Nov. 4 Print**: The two U.S. Senate candidates
Nov. 4 Online: The two U.S. Senate candidates

* **Nov. 5 Print**: Bronco John Elway gets ready to throw a pass
Nov. 5 Online: Leadville garage when five young men died

* **Nov. 6 Print**: Clintons greet supporters in Little Rock
Nov. 6 Online: Winning Senate candidate and his wife

* **Nov. 7 Print**: Survivor of E. coli scare peeps from blanket
Nov. 7 Online: Winning Senate candidate jokes with a staffer

Newspaper Nonreadership: A Study of Motivations

Abstract

Despite decades of research on declining newspaper readership, the newspaper industry still does not know how to reverse this trend. This study draws on the uses and gratifications perspective to provide new insight into the link between motivation to seek information and time spent reading newspapers. This survey analysis confirms that newspaper nonreadership is not solely a function of demographics, but that the root of nonreadership is a lack of motivation to seek information.

Newspaper Nonreadership: A Study of Motivations

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Introduction

For decades, newspaper readership has been declining. Starting in the late 1940s, readership of daily newspapers began dropping, with the decrease most marked among younger adults, ages 20 to 29 (Robinson, 1980). The average weekday readership of newspaper declined from 77 percent of Americans in 1971 to 67 percent in 1982 (Bogart, 1982). In 1970, daily newspaper circulation fell below the number of U.S. households for the first time this century, and it has been decreasing ever since (Bogart, 1989). For the newspaper industry, this is sobering news indeed because without new newspaper readers filling in whether longtime readers left off, what will become of newspapers' role in a society? And how will the decline in newspaper readership influence a Democratic society? Frequent newspaper readers, especially those younger than 30 years old, are more likely to vote (Barnhurst & Wartella, 1991). Bogart (1989) argues that newspaper reading, political interest, and education level are connected; as fewer young adults become newspaper readers, fewer would be expected to vote. In today's era of declining readership, nonreadership has become of more interest in both the academic and professional world of journalism. From a journalism industry standpoint, the study of why people read -- or do not read -- newspapers is incredibly important. Unless newspaper professionals find out how to attract and retain readers, the industry will continue to decline and, perhaps, eventually die. The issue is equally key from an academic point of view. Newspapers are a part of our nation's cultural makeup as they attempt to reflect what is happening in our country and its world. The diminishment of the role of newspapers in society would change forever our nation's culture.

Academic research has focused on declining readership for decades, developing demographic profiles of newspaper nonreaders (Sobal & Jackson-Beeck, 1981). Researchers also have focused on other factors such as readers' dependency on newspapers to meet their needs that make readers and nonreaders different (Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993; Penrose, Weaver, Cole, & Shaw, 1974; Poindexter, 1979). A link between people's perceived credibility of newspapers and their preference for the medium has been examined (Wanta & Hu, 1994; M. Burgoon, J. Burgoon, & Wilkinson, 1981; & Robinson, 1980). From the uses and gratifications standpoint, researchers have studied what needs newspapers meet (Dobos, 1992; Perse & Courtright, 1993; Rubin, 1993). With this foundation, this study intends to advance this pool of research by comparing newspaper readers with nonreaders. Using a survey, this study will seek to elaborate and expand knowledge about what motivates people to seek newspapers. It also will examine how newspapers meet or fail to meet these needs. This study will ask: What drives readers to pick up a newspaper? This study will begin with a historical overview of readership studies and theory and follow with an examination of nonreader profiles.

Theory

The uses and gratifications approach has long been a part of media research. Thirty years ago, Katz (1959) is credited with first describing the approach and arguing that media messages generally cannot affect someone who has no use for them. Klapper (1963) expanded on this idea, stating that the uses and gratifications perspective appropriately shifts the focus of media effect from what the media does to people to what people do with the media. Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rosengren (1985) posited that the uses and gratifications approach assumes an active audience; people select and use media to satisfy needs or desires; social and psychological factors mediate communication behavior; media use is goal-directed or motivated; each medium competes with other media; and people usually have more influence over other people than the media. Dobos (1992) found that media researchers used the approach extensively over the last 50 years to study a diversity of media content. She concluded that "overall, the uses and gratifications perspective offers a theoretically relevant and heuristic framework for the study of traditional and electronic media" (p. 46). Perse and Courtright (1993) employed the uses and gratifications approach to identify needs that people seek out media to meet including relaxation, entertainment, and learning. They found support for the uses and gratifications perspective, asserting that people pick media based on their image of what needs each medium will fulfill.

Loges and Ball-Rokeach (1993) expanded on the idea of uses and gratifications by developing a theory they called media system dependency. Their essential argument was that there is a connection between newspaper readers and their dependency on newspapers as a social and economic institution, and that this relationship guides people's media selection. Their study demonstrated that demographics alone do not explain who reads newspapers; research also must describe why they read and what they seek. While not employing a uses and gratifications approach, Wanta and Hu's (1994) study of media credibility also is helpful to lay the groundwork for a survey of newspaper reader motivations. They assumed that individuals are active processors of media messages, and found that if people find a medium credible, they will rely on it more; therefore, they will expose themselves to this medium frequently. In an earlier study, Burgoon, Burgoon, and Wilkinson (1981) used a similar approach and found the degree to which a newspaper is accurate, current, trustworthy, vigilant, personal, and involved in the community has salience to reader satisfaction.

Nonreadership Profiles

For decades, studies have found a fairly distinct profile of the subgroup of nonreaders. In 1961-62, Westley and Severin (1964) posited the framework of these subgroups in a statewide study of Wisconsin residents that found that nonreaders typically had low income and low educational achievement; were more likely to live in rural areas and be socially isolated; and commonly fell into two ages groups, 20 to 29 years old or at least 70 years old. Their work became a model for nonreadership profiles. Ten years later, Penrose, Weaver, Cole, and Shaw (1974) replicated Westley and Severin's work, surveying nonreaders in North Carolina. They found even more people were not reading newspapers than Westley and Severin had reported, but that the same type of person was likely to be a nonreader. Poindexter (1979) surveyed nonreaders in six northeastern United States cities, and, again, found a similar profile as these earlier studies. However, she also found that the most common reasons nonreaders gave for not reading newspapers were: lack of time, use of another news medium, cost, and lack of interest in the contents. She concluded that her findings point to the need to recognize that there is not a homogenous nonreading segment of the population; in fact, some nonreaders do not fit the typical profile. Poindexter (1979) suggested that atypical nonreaders may say they do not read because of lack of time, but what they are really saying is the newspaper does not meet enough of their needs to warrant their time. Sobal and Jackson-Beeck (1981) continued the effort to describe nonreaders, finding evidence of the same demographic profile Westley and Severin had established. But Sobal and Jackson-Beeck also found that many nonreaders do not fit the profile; they posited that explaining nonreadership based solely on demographics is short-sighted. Perse and Courtright (1993) went beyond demographics as they searched for a profile of nonreaders. They used data collected in two waves that was drawn from a larger survey about the uses and gratifications of different communication channels in 1988. Among other questions, respondents were asked if 12 different communication channels, including newspapers, satisfied 11 communication needs. These needs were: relaxation, entertainment, forgetting work, having something to do with friends, learning, passing the time, satisfying a habit, excitement, easing loneliness, getting someone to do something for them. They found that print media, including newspapers, magazines, and books, fulfilled learning needs, but were not useful for satisfying social, arousal, or companionship needs.

Studies have established firmly a profile of newspaper nonreaders, yet also have suggested that demographics do not tell the whole story. This study will continue along this path to assess what makes readers and nonreaders different from each other. Uses and gratifications theory suggests that motivation is a key to why anyone seeks out any one medium. This study seeks to test this premise. This study hypothesizes:

Hypothesis:

> The less motivated people are to seek out information about the world around them, the less time they are likely to spend reading newspapers.

For this study, motivation to seek information is defined as an innate or learned desire that drives people to take the initiative to tap into a body of knowledge about other people to gratify a their need to know and to help people better live their lives. Time spent reading the newspaper was measured in minutes newspapers are read on an average day, days per week when newspapers are read, and with the product of these two numbers. This study posits that motivation to seek information is inextricably linked to newspaper readership based on the theory of uses and gratifications. People who have no motivation for information, or seek only to be entertained -- given an escape from everyday cares -- would not find regular enough gratification in newspaper reading to warrant continued readership. Only those people who truly want the information newspapers provide will take the initiative to read a newspaper.

Methods

A 14-day telephone survey of adults in the Syracuse, NY, area was conducted in late September and early October of 1996 by 44 graduate students at Syracuse University's S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. In order to generate a random sample of area residents, a CD-ROM telephone directory (SelectPhone, Northeast, 1997, first quarter) was used to develop the sampling frame for the study. All telephone numbers within the local calling area of Syracuse University were selected initially from the CD-ROM database. After eliminating all business and duplicate telephone numbers, a list of 197,000 residential Syracuse-area telephone numbers was identified for the study's sampling frame. The telephone numbers then were randomly ordered based on a computer-generated list of random numbers, and divided into groups of 50 telephone numbers to create 26 replicates of 50 numbers each for a total of 1,150 telephone numbers for the study. Further randomization within each household was achieved through the use of the Kish method, which was used to identify randomly individual male and female members of the households included in the study.

The questions used in this study were part of a larger telephone survey that contained 120 questions, nearly two-thirds of which reflected eight individual research interests of the contributing eight students. Topics included media credibility, media exposure, media as sources of political information, media coverage as a predictor of attitudes toward crime, and the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. The final third of the questionnaire included media use and demographic questions of relevance to all the researchers. Many questions used a Likert scale, and six questions in the main body of the survey were open-ended. An additional 30 questions regarding time spent with various media also were open-ended.

Forty-four communications graduate students at Syracuse University collected data for the survey. Of the total students involved, 36 worked solely as interviewers, four worked as both interviewers and supervisors, and four worked solely as supervisors. Of the 40 interviewers, 14 were required to work four 4-hour interviewing shifts. These students (plus a 15th student who volunteered to work two shifts) received two hours of training. The remaining 25 students were required to work one four-hour shift, and received 80 minutes of training prior to beginning interviewing. Eight graduate students in an advanced survey research class served as supervisors, and conducted interviews as time permitted.

Training manuals were used by all interviewers and supervisors involved in data collection. The manuals explained how to make initial contact with respondents, how to ask survey questions in a consistent manner, how to persuade reluctant respondents, and how to convince respondents who have refused to participate to change their minds. The manuals also included a segment explaining correct prompts interviewers can use to encourage respondents to answer question and the proper feedback interviewers can give to reinforce respondents.

A week prior to the survey, a pretest of the survey instrument was conducted. Seven graduate students in the advanced survey research class conducted telephone interviews with 25 respondents drawn from the same population as the actual survey sample. The same interviewing techniques that would be used in the actual survey, and as explained in the training manual, were used in the pretest. The data collected from the pretest were examined, and adjustments were made to the survey instrument to eliminate confusing or misleading questions in the final survey. Some questions also were dropped because little variance in respondents' answers was found in the pretest. Interviewers collected data by marking printed questionnaires by hand. Ten percent of the respondents who had completed questionnaires were recalled to verify that they had completed the survey. Interviewers surveyed 413 respondents.

Subsequent to the pretest, new codes were created, based on respondents' answers to items that were open-ended or had an "other, specify" category. Then after two days of interviewers, the first 101 instruments were reviewed for additional coding possibilities, and new categories were created as necessary. When this process was complete, the survey supervisors coded the instruments in accordance with the new coding categories, and then entered the data into an SPSS database. Descriptive statistics were run on each variable.

Operational Definitions of Variables

Five survey questions were used to test the hypothesis that the less motivated people are to seek information about the world around them, the less time they are likely to spend reading newspapers. The first of these questions used a Likert scale, and was worded as follows, "For the following statement, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. It is important for me to keep up with current events." This question was used based on the assumption that a desire to keep up with current events demonstrates a motivation to seek information. The responses were coded 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. Agreement with the statement was considered an indication of some motivation to seek information, while disagreement or a neutral response was deemed to show less motivation. The second of these three questions was worded as follows, "On the days when you read it, do you read the newspaper primarily for information or for entertainment?" The third question was, "When you watch it, do you watch television primarily for information or for entertainment?" For both questions, answers were coded 2 for information, 1 for both information and entertainment, 0 for entertainment, 0 for neither. Answers of information or both information and entertainment were considered to show motivation to seek information, while responses of entertainment, neither, don't know, or refused were considered to indicate less motivation.

The dependent variable of time spent reading newspapers was measured on a ratio scale with two questions worded as follows, "In an average week, how many days do you read a daily newspaper?" and "On an average day, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper?" The number of days was coded in days per week, from 0 to 7. The time spent reading was coded in minutes. The number of days was multiplied with the number of minutes spent reading for a new variable of the total time spent reading.

Statistics Used in the Analysis

To test the hypothesis, Pearson's r correlation coefficients and partial coefficients were run to analyze directional relationships between motivation to seek information and time spent reading newspapers.

Results

Data were analyzed from 413 surveys, of which 397 were completed, and 16 were partially completed. The procedural response rate was 78 percent. The sample over-represented women (56.4 percent of respondents were female). The sample was predominantly white in racial makeup (90.1 percent). The mean income range of the sample was $30,000 to $39,000; the mean educational level achieved was some college without graduating; and the median age was 46.1. The demographic makeup of the sample was fairly representative of the Syracuse, NY, area as indicated by U.S. Census data. Respondents younger than 18 were excluded from the sample.

The sample was made up largely of newspaper readers as only 9.4 percent of respondents reported spending no time reading newspapers on a typical day, and only 8.8 percent of respondents did not read a newspaper once during the week. The mean time spent reading newspapers per week was 200.07 minutes. Similarly, most respondents indicated that keeping up with current events was important to them; only 1.9 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with that premise. However, the social desirability of keeping up with the news may have influenced some respondents. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the variables relating to keeping up with current events, newspaper readership, and demographics.

For this study, time spent reading newspapers was measured through total time spent reading per day, the number of days per week when newspapers are read, and by using an index that was the product of these two numbers. Two variables measuring motivation to seek information were converted to zscores to determine the position of each case in the distribution of observed values. These questions asked whether information or entertainment were the primary motivation for seeking both newspapers and television.

Support was found for this study's premise that people seek television for entertainment, while they turn to newspapers for information. Of the respondents, 65.5 percent said they read newspapers primarily to fulfill the need for information, while 52 percent reported that television primarily gratifies an entertainment desire. Table 2 shows the percentages found for the variables of gender and for zscores of newspaper and television motivations.

Pearson's r correlation coefficient was used to test the premise that the more people seek information, the more time they spend reading newspapers. Support was found for this hypothesis. A positive correlation of .11 at p=.02 was found between seeking newspapers for information and the number of days spent when newspapers are read, and a positive correlation of .10 at p=.04 was found between seeking newspapers for information and the time per week spent reading newspapers. A desire to keep up with current events was correlated positively at .24 at p=.00. with the number of days when newspapers are read. Current events also had a positive correlation of .10 at p=.04 with seeking television for entertainment. These results suggest that the stronger the desire for information, the more time people with spend reading newspapers. Positive correlation also was found between income and a desire to keep up with current events days per week when newspapers are read and between education and current events; thereby, reinforcing earlier research. Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients and p-values.

To control for the demographic variables of age, education, and income, partial correlation coefficients were analyzed. The variables of age, education, and income were controlled for individually, in pairs, and as a group. Again, support was found for the hypothesis. For all the control variables in each possible combination, a positive correlation was found between minutes per week when newspapers are read with a desire to keep up with current events. Minutes per week when newspapers are read, a multiplicative index of minutes per day and days per week when newspapers are read, was used for partial correlations because it was judged a better measure of time spent reading newspapers than either variable separately. A positive correlation also was found between minutes per week when newspapers are read and information as a motivation for seeking newspapers when controlling for income. These results suggest that people highly motivated to seek information spend more time with newspapers. Tables 4 shows partial correlations for each of the control variables and groupings of control variables.

Together, the results of correlation coefficient and partial coefficient tests showed support for the hypothesis -- that the less motivated people are to seek out information about the world around them, the less time they are likely to spend reading the newspaper. Respondents who had little desire to seek information or little drive to keep with current events read newspapers less frequently than respondents with a strong desire to seek information and a strong drive to keep up with current events. Similarly, when controlling for demographic variables of age, education, and income, a positive correlation was found between time spent reading newspapers and a desire to keep up with current events, and respondents who read newspapers frequently were found to view newspapers as a means to fulfill their need for information. These results support the uses and gratifications theory that people gravitate to media that fulfill their needs and shun media that satisfy no desires.

Discussion

For decades newspaper readership has been declining (Robinson, 1980), and, for just as long, researchers have been asking why. Since 1970, when daily newspaper circulation fell below the number of U.S. households for the first time (Bogart, 1982), this question has taken on greater urgency among journalism professionals and academics as they seek to curtail the trend of declining readership. Academic research has developed demographic profiles of nonreaders (Sobal & Jackson-Beeck, 1981); focused on readers' dependency on newspapers to meet their needs (Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993; Penrose, Weaver, Cole, & Shaw, 1974; and Poindexter, 1979); and examined whether the perceived credibility of the newspaper medium is connected to its importance in people's lives (Wanta & Hu, 1994; M. Burgoon, J. Burgoon, & Wilkinson, 1981; and Robinson, 1980). Much of this research has been grounded in the uses and gratifications theory that people will turn to newspapers if the medium meets their needs, and, conversely, they will shun the medium if it does not fulfill any of their desires. As Katz (1959), who is credited with first describing the approach, explained, "Even the most potent of the media cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no 'use' for it" (p. 2). From this standpoint, this current study examined what motivations or needs are met when people turn to newspapers, and how the gratification of these motivations is related to the time people spend reading newspapers. This study focused on the motivation of a desire to seek information, as defined as an innate or learned drive that makes people take the initiative to tap into a body of knowledge about other people to gratify their need to know and to help people live better lives. This study hypothesized that the less motivated people are to seek information about the world around them, the less time they are likely to spend reading the newspaper.

The study employed a telephone survey of 413 adults from the Syracuse, NY, area who had been selected randomly from a CD-ROM telephone directory. Five survey questions out of 120 on the instrument were used to the test the hypothesis. Two questions measured the dependent variable of time spent reading newspaper by reporting in days and in minutes how much time people spent reading newspapers; the product of minutes and days spent reading subsequently created a third variable to measure time spent reading newspapers. Three questions measured the independent variable of degree of motivation to seek information. These questions asked people about the important of current events in their lives, and whether information or entertainment was their primary motivation for seeking both newspapers and television. A desire to keep up with current events was considered an indication of motivation to seek newspapers, and citing information as the reason for seeking either newspapers or television was considered to show motivation for seeking information in general. Correlation coefficients were used to test directional relationships between motivation to seek information and time spent reading newspapers.

Overall, this study found support for the hypothesis. People who are less motivated to seek information, spend less time reading newspapers. More specifically, the strongest positive correlation was found between a high desire to keep up with current events and a large number of days per week when newspapers are read. The stronger individuals' drive to keep up with current events, the more minutes people spent reading. People who are highly motivated to seek information through newspapers were found to read newspapers on more days in a week, and were found to spend more minutes per week reading newspapers. A finding of a positive correlation with both variables reinforces the premise that people who want information read newspapers more; it also diminishes the concern that a single measure of either minutes or days would not adequately calculate time spent reading newspapers. Strong positive correlation also was found between people seeking information from newspapers and people seeking entertainment from television; this suggests support for this study's premise that information is a strong motivator of newspaper readers. In fact, this study found that 65.5 percent of people seek newspapers primarily for information, and 17.5 percent said they seek newspaper partially for information and partially for entertainment, while only 15.7 percent said entertainment was their key motivator. Similarly, 52 percent of respondents reported that television primarily fills their need for entertainment, 30.4 percent said television gratifies both information and entertainment desires; and only 17.3 percent seek television for information. These results support the correlation findings, providing further evidence that a relationship exists between a desire to seek information and time spent reading newspapers. Correlation coefficients also found statistically significant relationships between income and education and a desire to keep up with current events; and between age and income and spending more time with newspapers. These results confirm earlier research that has found that nonreaders typically have low income and low educational achievement (Penrose, Weaver, Cole, & Shaw, 1974; Westley & Severin, 1964).

Partial coefficients when controlling for the variables of age, education, and income both separately, in pairs, and as a group, also found support for this study's hypothesis. The strongest positive correlation was found between a desire to keep up with current events and minutes per week when newspapers are read when controlling for age, education, and income separately and in groups. The more important keeping up with current events was to individuals, the more time per week they spent reading newspapers when controlling; for each control variable separately, in pairs, and as a group. People who had a strong desire to seek information also were found to spend more minutes per week reading newspapers when controlling for income. This suggests that the link between motivation for information and high newspaper readership is not dependent solely on antecedent demographic variables. The study results are particularly emphatic considering the sample was made up overwhelmingly of people who have experience with newspapers; only 37 respondents, or 9.4 percent, never read a newspaper.

This study expands the body of knowledge in the uses and gratifications perspective on why people read or do not read newspapers by establishing an inextricable link between motivation to seek information and newspaper readership. These results reinforce the importance of demographics in the profile of nonreaders, but, more importantly, it steps beyond demographics. It establishes that, while people with low income and low education may tend to shun newspapers, that may not be because of their demographic profile in and of itself; it may be that people who have little motivation to seek information also happen to fall into these demographic groups. When Poindexter (1979) surveyed nonreaders in six northeastern United States cities, she found that lack of time, use of another news medium, cost, and lack of interest in the contents were the most common reason people gave for not reading newspapers. She suggested that when nonreaders say they do not have time for newspapers, what they really are saying is newspapers do not meet enough of their needs to warrant their time. This current study confirms these findings, and begins to examine what lack of interest in newspapers means. By examining what motivates people to read newspapers, this study begins to point to how newspapers can re-harness the interest of the American public; how to make newspapers a medium people will not deem a waste of time; and how to motivate people to seek information about the world around them. This study further paves the path to turning around the trend of the last three decades of declining newspaper readership.

Several limitations to this work should be considered in interpreting these findings:

1. The sample over-represented women 56.4 percent to 41.3 percent; therefore, there may be some question that having more men in the sample may have changed some results. However, this limitation is deemed to have little affect as the representation of men, while not equal to women, was substantial.

2. Time spent reading newspapers was measured through respondents self-reporting time spent reading on an average day, days per week when newspapers are read, and by multiplying these two figures to find minutes per week when newspapers are read. Self-reporting time doing anything may not be accurate, and it is unclear whether people more accurately self-report minutes or days or whether a product of the two is more reliable than either minutes or days individually. All three measures were used to make up for this limitation. However, further methodological research assessing the reliability of measurements of time spent reading newspapers would advance the understanding of newspaper readership.

This study has begun to define what people mean when they say newspapers do not interest them; it has started to probe what motivations newspapers gratify. To continue this path, future research should examine whether other motivations --- beyond information and entertainment -- play a role in people seeking newspapers. A measure of motivation also must be defined. This study measured motivation to seek information, in part, by asking people if a desire to keep up with current events was important. Perhaps further research could measure whether people who say they keep up with current events, really do as they say. Further research should delve more specifically into what people mean when they say current events are important to them; how people define the needs newspapers gratify; and how demographics relate to these needs. This and the body of research that comes before it has laid a foundation that the more important obtaining information is to people, the more they turn to newspapers. The overriding question remains: What makes people want to seek the information that newspapers provide? The next step is beginning to answer this question.

Tables

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for current events, newspaper days, newspaper minutes, newspaper minutes per week, and demographic variables.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
"It is important for me to keep up with current events." *	4.35	.68	412
Income**	4.99	2.39	341
"On an average day, how much time do you spend reading a newspaper?" ***	38.88	32.46	393
Education (in years)	16.68	2.49	395
"In an average week, how many days do you read a daily newspapers?" +	4.70	2.66	397
Age (in years)	46.10	16.12	392
Minutes per week reading newspapers. ++	200.07	194.90	393

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*Responses were coded: 5 = strongly agree, 4= agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

**Answers were coded: 1=Less than $10,000, 2=$10,000 to $19,999, 3=$20,000 to $29,999, 4=$30,000 to $39,999, 5=$40,000 to $49,999, 6=$50,000 to $59,999, 7=$60,000 to $69,999, 8=$70,000 to $79,999, 9=$80,000 or more.

***Responses were coded in minutes.

+Responses were coded from 0 to 7 days a week.

++Responses are the product of minutes per day spent reading newspapers and days per week when newspapers are read.

Table 2. Percentages of gender, newspaper motivation, and television motivation variables.

Variables	Percentages
Gender	
Male	41.3
Female	58.7
	100.00% (N=397)
On the days when you read it, do you read the newspaper primarily for information or for entertainment?	
Entertainment	15.7
Both Info. and Enter.	17.5
Information	65.5
	100.00% (N=394)
When you watch it, do you watch television primarily for information or entertainment?	
Entertainment	52.0
Both Info. and Enter.	30.4
Information	17.3
	100.00% (N=392)

Table 3. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients of motivations, minutes per week, age, education, income, current events, newspaper days, and newspaper minutes variables.

Variables	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Current Events	.18 b (327)	.18 b (327)	.06 (327)	.24 b (327)	.19 b (327)	.05 (327)	.10 a (327)	.08 (327)
2.Education	______	-.04 (327)	-.08 (327)	.08 (327)	.44 b (327)	-.08 (327)	.00 (327)	-.08 (327)
3.Newspaper minutes per week **		______	.73 b (327)	.61 b (327)	.05 (327)	.10 a (327)	.05 (327)	.44 b (327)
4. Newspaper minutes per day ***			______	.17 b (327)	-.06 (327)	.04 (327)	-.01 (327)	.35 b (327)
5.Newspaper days per week +				______	.20 b (327)	.11 a (327)	.06 (327)	.27 b (327)
6. Income ++					______	.02 (327)	-.01 (327)	-.03 (327)
7. Newspaper motivation ++++						______	.26 b (327)	.12 a (327)
8. TV motivation ++++							______	.07 a (327)
9. Age								

*Respondents were asked if it is important to them to keep up with current events. Responses were coded: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree.

**Responses were the product of minutes per day and days per week when newspapers are read.

***Responses were coded in minutes.

+ Responses were codes in 0 to 7 days per week.

++Answers were coded: 1= Less than $10,000, 2=$10,000 to $19,999 , 3=$20,000 to $29,999, 4=$30,000 to $39,999, 5=$40,000 to $49,999, 6=$50,000 to $59,999, 7=$60,000 to $69,999, 9=$70,000 to $79,999, 9=$80,000 or more.

+++Respondents were asked what is their primary motivation for reading newspapers. Answers were coded: 2= information, 1=both information and entertainment, 0=entertainment, 0=neither.

++++Respondents were asked what is their primary motivation for watching television. Answers were coded: 2= information, 1=both information and entertainment, 0=entertainment, 0=neither.

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a $p < .05$ b $p < .01$

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Table 4. Partial correlation coefficients for days when newspapers are read and motivations for seeking newspapers and television.

Variables correlated with minutes per week when newspapers are read *	Control variables	Partial Correlation Coefficients
"When you watch it, do you watch television primarily for information or entertainment?" **	Age	.04
	Education	.08
	Income	.05
	Age, education	.04
	Age, income	.02
	Education, income	.05
	Age, income, education	.02
"On the days, when you read it, do you read the newspaper primarily for information or for entertainment?" ***	Age	-.01
	Education	.06
	Income	.20 a
	Age, education	-.01
	Age, income	.05
	Education, income	.09
	Age, income, education	.04
"It is important for me to keep up with current events." +	Age	.17 b
	Education	.20 b
	Income	.17 b
	Age, education	.17 b
	Age, income	.14 b
	Education, income	.18 b
	Age, income, education	.15 b

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* Responses were a multiplicative index of minutes per day and days per week when newspapers were read.
** Responses were coded: 2 = information, 1 = both information and entertainment, 0 = entertainment, 0 = neither.
*** Responses were coded: 2 = information, 1 = both information and entertainment, 0 = entertainment, 0 = neither.
+Responses were coded: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree.

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a $p < .05$ b $p < .01$

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Untangling the Web: Teaching Students How to Use Online Resources and Critically Evaluate Information

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An invaluable lesson

Journalists are indebted to Pierre Salinger, the former ABC reporter and press secretary under President John F. Kennedy. Salinger unintentionally issued a wake-up call to news media worldwide when, based on apparently fictitious information on a home page on the World Wide Web, he alleged this past November that a U.S. Navy missile downed TWA Flight 800 last July, killing the 230 people aboard (Associated Press, Nov. 8, 1996). Salinger's accusations sounded the alarm that traveling on the so-called Information Superhighway is fraught with danger (Coates, 1996). They also reinforced the importance of the fundamental journalistic practices of critically evaluating the credibility of a source and ensuring the accuracy of information.

The U.S. government was quick to rebut Salinger's accusations, which he said were based on an assessment by French intelligence (Anderson, 1996; Dine, 1996; Los Angeles Times, Nov. 9, 1996). Salinger said he had received a tip via an electronic mail message and checked it out on the home page (Coates, 1996). Ironically, it was Salinger's credentials as a journalist that made the story credible to the mainstream press, (Achenbach, 1996; Turner, 1996). "This is the only reason, indeed, that the news organizations reported what Salinger said: As a former White House press secretary and ABC News correspondent, he seemed like a credible person. Credibility transcends generations -- people graduate to the status of "legendary" and "venerable," Achenbach wrote.

The rumor had been circulating for months among discussion groups on the Internet, whose members had better tools to evaluate it more critically and had largely rejected it. One Netizen interviewed for a story in *Newsweek* (Turner, 1996) put it this way: "Well, Pierre, if you'd get a little Net-savvy, you'd figure it out. Learn to surf, Dude."

Initially, the mainstream press appeared to consider Salinger the target of a cruel hoax and thus appeared to feel some sympathy for him. But they also recognized the ability of Salinger and the Internet to mislead. "So far, however, his shoot-from-the-hip brand of journalism seems only to have increased public confusion -- and cynicism about the government and the media," wrote Dickey and Hosenball in *Newsweek* (Nov. 25, 1996).

But the mainstream press' treatment of Salinger changed this March when he went on the attack again, this time contending that a blip detected on radar was proof of his friendly-fire theory (Goodman, 1997; Rashbaum, 1997). The FBI said the blip was an unarmed Navy reconnaissance plane (Associated Press, March, 21, 1997). For example, the headline on an editorial in the *San Francisco Examiner* called the allegations "Salinger's Sad Obsession" (March 16, 1997). The *Rocky Mountain News* (March 5, 1995) proclaimed "Salinger's recklessness" and put the situation in perspective: "Although this explanation of the crash doesn't begin to make sense, it can do untold damage, seeing as how it issued from the lips of someone who, at one point in his career, had some credibility and prominence."

But the opinion section article that offered perhaps the most insight into how this episode affected journalism and how it illustrated the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet as a information source appeared in the *Arizona Republic* on Nov. 18, 1996, with the headline "A Tangled Web." The article noted that for all its promise and "for its potential for being an extraordinary, enriching opportunity for unlimited access and delivery of information, the Web as a source of news is a place rife with pitfalls" (Arizona Republic, 1996). Pointing out that Salinger was snagged by some "phony information, some official-looking trash," the article emphasized that "most anybody, anywhere and at any time can create an item on the Internet and make it look credible."

Importantly, the article further pointed out that "online information doesn't follow standards" and "can be disseminated with a high degree of anonymity." Unlike traditional media, the article noted, "computer literates who would be publishers invest nothing of themselves -- their reputations, their capital -- into producing something too easily mistaken for `news.'"

The article also pointed out that the misinformation had important repercussions, including forcing federal officials to work "overtime trying to disprove the allegations as `absolute, pure, utter nonsense.'" Noting that the information had "attached itself in a circuitous way to a famous newsman's reputation," the commentary concluded by pointing out the Internet's "dangerous potential of gaining unearned respect and credibility from millions of people."

In a speech titled "Dangerous Road Ahead: Ethical Potholes in the Information Highway," Merrill (1996) urged journalists to act responsibly and ethically when using information from cyberspace. Merrill listed several core principles for ethical journalism: being truthful (including being accurate), being credible (including having a good reputation), being thorough, being neutral or dispassionate, being serious and unsensational, and being fair. But he zeroed in on the one he considered most important: "The key principle in all of these, I think, is credibility. All journalists want to be believed. If news is not credible, then the whole structure of journalism falls down (p, 41)."

Tackling the Web

If a veteran reporter such as Salinger can be so easily snared by misinformation on the Web, what about a student reporter? Should journalism schools be teaching reporters the skills needed to assess the credibility of information on the Web? What about the accuracy of that information? Should colleges and universities be graduating students who can critically assess information and verify its accuracy?

As the Salinger episode indicates, the credibility of the profession, which a recent survey by the Pew Research Center indicates has fallen sharply in the past 10 years (Nelson, 1997), is also at stake. Information can mislead as well as inform. The technology of the World Wide Web allows journalists to access large amounts of information quickly. Information from a variety of sources can add depth and breadth to stories and help readers understand our complex and interrelated world. That information can be transferred to a journalist's computer terminal in a matter of seconds from anywhere in the world.

But the technology can neither ensure the accuracy of the information nor verify its source. The technology cannot assess the importance of the information, determine whether it is credible, or decide whether it should be included in a story.

These tasks must be performed by trained and responsible journalists.

Journalists have an ethical obligation to ensure that the information they report is accurate and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that accuracy. Educators have a responsibility to teach budding journalists not only how to use the resources of the Web, but to evaluate them critically and ensure the accuracy and credibility of the information.

In this paper, the researcher details an instructional approach that was designed to teach student reporters, copy editors and photographers how to gather, critically assess and verify information on the World Wide Web. It was used during the winter 1997 semester at the *Columbia Missourian*, a newspaper staffed by faculty editors and students that serves a medium-sized Midwestern city. Data concerning the use of a Web site developed as part the project also will be discussed.

In the beginning

As the *Arizona Republic* article (1996) pointed out, the Internet has the potential to provide users, including journalists, with a tremendous amount of information with a few keystrokes on a computer. Riddick and King (1995) realized this potential early and wrote a book, "The Online Journalist: Using the Internet and Other Electronic Resources," to help journalists mine the resources of the Internet.

The year of the book is important because that is the year the graphical World Wide Web really took off, causing a virtual revolution in cyberspace. In a sequel to the their book, Reddick and King (1996, p. 56) point out that in 1993 there were 100 home pages on the Web; by 1996 that number had jumped to 4 million. Navigation on the Web is point-and-click via hypertext links, and the graphical interface made it attractive to both consumers and businesses. Internet use soared, and business sites soon became dominant. And the number of households online has since more than doubled from a estimated 9.6 million in 1995 to 22.7 million in 1997 (McGrath, 1997). Responding to this increased use, government, commercial and not-for-profit home pages have mushroomed as well. This proliferation has meant more useful Web sites for journalists but has complicated the task of assessing the credibility of information contained on them.

Relying on *Riding the Internet Highway: Complete Guide to 21st Century Communications* (1993), Riddick and King's book, and information learned in Dr. Ann Brill's new media class at the University of Missouri-Columbia, the researcher wrestled in 1995 with how to integrate the use of the Internet into daily journalism at the *Missourian*. As a news editor, the researcher focused on the copy desk. The result was the Copy Desk Reference Site, a home page of hypertext links grouped mainly by geography that appears in the appendix.

At the top of the page were hypertext links to Internet search engines and a few sites with general information. Links to sites important to the city of Columbia, the state of Missouri, and the United States followed. Navigating the Web can be time-consuming and can often lead to dead ends if you do not know where you are going. Time is precious on the copy desk, and information must be accessed quickly for it to be useful. Consequently, a page of links that takes the copy editor directly to the information saves time and makes using the Web practical.

The researcher evaluated the information at the Web sites and chose links that had credible information based on standard journalistic criteria. Meyer (1988) notes that the Webster's New World Dictionary definition of credibility is "a reasonable grounds for being believed." Building on the work of Giaziano and McGrath (1986), Meyer used factor analysis to uncover two dimensions of credibility regarding newspapers: believability and community affiliation. Giaziano and McGrath found a single dimension in which credibility rested on such considerations as whether the newspaper could be trusted, separates facts from opinions, is factual, tells the whole story, is accurate and is unbiased. Meyer found these considerations helped readers assess the believability of the information in a newspaper.

Meyer's other dimension focused on whether the newspaper is perceived as working for the interests of the community. As Meyer pointed out, rarely will a newspaper be able to score high on both dimensions, although one can remain strong while the other is under fire. Readers and journalists apparently felt Salinger was trying to work for the best interests of the country but his information was not believable.

By including links to sites deemed credible in advance, the researcher increased the probability that student copy editors would access credible information. Most of the links were to government sites, online newspapers or online morgues. Copy editors were encouraged to use the links and resort to search engines only if they could not find the information via the links. Using search engines takes more time and increases the chances that the student will go to a Web site where the information will not be credible. To increase Web use, a computer on the copy desk was used strictly for searching the Web, and it had the Copy Desk Reference site as a bookmark.

In advanced copy editing class and in the *Missourian* newsroom, copy editors learned how to use the site and the researcher discussed how to evaluate the information on Web pages. Copy editors mainly use Web sites to verify information that is already in a story. Frequently, they verify names, titles, addresses, dates, and ages. Therefore, it is not surprising that the *Digital Missourian* online morgue appeared to be the most frequently used link on the Copy Desk Reference Site. Another frequently used link was a page on the *Digital Missourian* that linked to photos and basic information about Columbia City Council members. The Web sites of the Missouri Senate and House of Representatives were also used frequently to check on members' districts and to track bills.

Great leap forward

During the school year, the researcher noticed that copy editing students at the *Missourian* also were using the reference site for reporting. They were primarily using the *Digital Missourian* morgue and the search engines, but they were using the other sites as well, especially the government beat reporters.

As a result, the researcher decided to expand the site to include a home page for each city desk beat. Although not realizing it initially, the researcher discovered that the move to include links for reporters constituted a fundamental shift. Whereas copy editors generally compare the information already in a story with that on a Web site, reporters can use information from a site in their stories. Like Salinger, they could spread misinformation if they do not have the skills to critically assess the information and verify its accuracy.

Although pointing out the Internet's potential to provide information quickly, Noack (1996) says that gathering information on the Net is an "acquired skill." "Learn the resources first if you expect to use them quickly," Noack quotes *Nashville Tennessean* reporter Heather Newman as saying.

Noack notes that a 1996 survey found that 23 percent of 800 editors polled reported they or their staff used the Internet and commercial online services daily -- up from 16 percent in 1995. The survey was conducted by Donald Middleberg, CEO of Middleberg & Associates, a New York public relations firm and Steven S. Ross, an associate professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Garrison (1995) calls computer-assisted reporting the "dominant news-gathering tool of this decade" and notes that the "trend has developed so quickly that scholarship and even professional literature have not kept up with its use."

Cohen (1996) emphasizes that credibility is the "Achilles heal" of the Internet. He notes that experts agree that sources must be checked out "the old-fashioned way." "The information on the screen is tempting, it looks nice and cute and it's very available," says Pam Robinson, former *Newsday* senior editor and operator of Editors Ink, in Cohen's article. "However, I don't think my site or the Internet replace an established network of people you can rely on; both are a supplement."

Gunartne and Lee (1996) point out that journalism educators must teach students to "search cyberspace to locate newsworthy data and human resources, just as they do in the physical world."

They note that the Internet is "bound to become an integral part of mass communication teaching by the turn of the century" and offer a schedule to introduce the Internet into reporting, copy editing and international communication classes.

A *Missourian* project

Because adding reporting links to the initial site was a time-consuming undertaking, it became a *Missourian* project for the researcher. Initially, the researcher was concerned about how to generate the links for every beat at the newspaper and at the same time teach the students how to critically evaluate Web sites. The tasks were combined in an assignment to an intermediate reporting class.

In a presentation to the class, the researcher discussed the World Wide Web and explored how to evaluate information critically. The students were taught to use the search engines on the Copy Desk Reference Site and other links contained there. For their assignment, students were given three copies of a "Checklist to Evaluate Internet Sites" and asked to select sites with credible information that were relevant to their beats. Each part of the checklist was discussed with the students.

The checklist, which appears in the appendix, was designed to help students think critically about the site and about the usefulness of the information contained there. As Cohen (1995) pointed out, checking credibility essentially involves "old-fashioned" means. But there are some clues that are specific to the Web. The Universal Resource Locator, or URL, is the Web address of the site. Sites have a specific domain names based on which organization operates them (Hoffman, p. 30). In general, government sites, which have a ".gov" in their URLs, have more credible and less opinionated information than, for example, a site with an ".org", a not-for-profit organization. Students were told the meanings of each domain and advised how to use that information when assessing the sites.

Some sites also include when they were last updated. Although that information alone does not ensure credibility, a recently updated site indicates that the information likely is timely and the webmaster is watching the site closely. If a site does not include when it was last updated, students were told to look at when it was created. Sites that were created recently are more likely to have more timely information that sites that were created long ago.

The features of Web sites vary, and they make some sites more useful to journalists than others. A search capability, for instance, generally speeds up information retrieval. Sites that have source documents are usually more useful than sites that do not. If the site has hypertext links to other sources of information, it is generally more useful.

Web sites also vary regarding the type of information that journalists can use. In most cases, journalists probably will use the site for background information. That background information can help the reporter ask more pointed questions in subsequent interviews. Other sites have source documents that can be used directly in stories. Some sites define terms, such as libel, whereas others contain the names and telephone numbers of sources. Students were asked to consider all of these characteristics when assessing the overall usefulness of sites.

Finally, students were asked to rate on a Likert-type scale the credibility of information at the site, its usefulness and its ease of navigation. These measures were included mainly to ensure that the students made an overall assessment of the site.

Students varied widely in their responses. Some of them took the assignment seriously and did an outstanding job. One listed the URLs of several Columbia businesses that became the basis of a separate home page devoted to local business links. A few took it as a joke; one included the World Wrestling Federation home page and another the Oprah Winfrey Show site. For the most part, however, they did a good job and provided about 40 links that were used on the subsequent site.

One thing that the students emphasized was that they wished the assignment had come earlier in the semester so that they could have used the Web techniques more in their reporting.

With that as a springboard, the researcher began designing the pages for the new site. Because ease of use and loading time were important factors, graphics were kept to a minimum. A tables design was employed because it separated items and made them easier to pick out.

Missourian Web Resources

The city desk beat pages were tailored to the *Missourian*. Like the copy desk site, links were chosen according to the credibility of the information and their usefulness. Frequently used links to reference sites were positioned on the top row. Next came Columbia links, which reporters use most. State links followed and then national links. The remainder of the page was links that did not fit well in any of the previous groups. This design enabled reporters to view the links that they used most at the top of the screen. As an example, the Education Beat page appears in the appendix.

Some beats, such as Health/Science/Environment, were divided into several pages to facilitate use. As seen in the main city desk page in the appendix, the final beats were: Business, Criminal Justice, Education, Environment, Food, Health Care, Local Government, Neighbors, Politics, Religion, Science and Weekly, a free-distribution newspaper that serves several counties that have large rural areas.

The links came from a variety of sources. Many of them came from the National Journal's *The Federal Internet Source* (1996). Other important sources include the Dallas Morning News Beat pages (1996) on the Investigative Reporters and Editors Web site, MEGASOURCES (1997), the Online Journalists Survival Guide, St. Louis SPJ Launch Pad for Journalists, and the Columbia Online Information Network's resources (1997).

As the project took shape, many of the links that did not pertain directly to the beats were reorganized into more useful categories. The site, as seen in the appendix, was renamed Missourian Newsroom Web Resources. In addition, the main page was divided into these categories: City Desk Beat Reference Page; Sports Beat Reference Page; General Information; Digital Media and Online Morgues; Phone Directories; Sources, E-mail Addresses and Discussion Group Lists; Internet Search Engines; City of Columbia; Copy Desk: Editing and Design; and Internet Sites for Journalists. (The Photojournalism Reference Page, Weather and Maps were added this summer.) The beat pages had become one of many main pages, although they were still the heart of the site.

The sports desk was given its own main page. At the

Missourian, the sports desk had been using the Web the most. Sports editors often could find out game scores on the Web before they moved on the Associated Press wire. Before the newsroom resources site was created, the sports links were stored in bookmarks, which could easily be erased if the computer system crashes. The researcher and a reporting student created the links at one sitting, and they were used that evening.

General Information mainly consisted of reference sites. It included dictionaries, libraries, and other information sources such as Facts on File (1995) and the CIA World Factbook (1997).

Digital Media and Online Morgues contained links to the online morgues of several newspapers, including the Digital Missourian (1997), the Columbia Daily Tribune (1997) and the Kansas City Star (1997). The page also included links to online media throughout the world, including the Associated Press wire (1997), CNN (1997), USA Today (1997), the Washington Post (1997), the Los Angeles Times (1997) and MSNBC (1997). Via these links, reporters could keep informed about breaking news, as well as read the original stories in online newspapers to better localize stories of national significance.

The phone directories can be used to get residential and commercial telephone numbers and addresses without going through directory assistance, which can save money. All numbers are not listed, and reporters still must contend with incorrect numbers because of our highly mobile society.

Sources, E-mail Addresses and Discussion Group List helps reporters get in touch with sources. Many of these sources are also incomplete, but they are a good place to start.

Internet Search Engines is a list of links to the top search engines. Savvy, which is situated at Colorado State University, is first because it is one of the most useful. It searches several top search engines.

The City of Columbia page has links to information specific to the city. It also contains links to calendar items and the weather forecast. This page and others with Columbia sites are especially important at the *Missourian* because most of the staff changes three times per year.

The Copy Desk: Editing and Design page essentially consists of links to home pages that were formerly handouts in the advanced editing class. Students can access the information anytime. And it saves paper costs in a time of tight budgets. If students want a hard copy, they can print out the pages at any computing lab on campus.

The final category is Internet Sites for Journalists. It includes links to various journalism organizations and other sites that are geared specifically to journalists.

Drafting Guidelines

The site was soon completed, and plans were made to teach the students how to use it and to critically evaluate information. Because information on the Web can mislead as well as inform, one task remained: drafting guidelines for its use. This task was difficult because it delved into uncharted territory. The Web has no umbrella agency that sets standards for accuracy, balance and fairness. Each webmaster is responsible for establishing standards, and many sites have none. Therefore, editors must impose formal guidelines that journalists must follow when evaluating information and deciding whether to include it in a story.

Specifically, *Missourian* editors wanted to ensure that reporters followed strict guidelines regarding the use of information from the Web in stories and that they attributed it properly. Salinger's inadvertent wake-up call had been heard. Consequently, a meeting of the editors was held in which guidelines were discussed.

Editors agreed that in general reporters should assess the credibility of the information on the Web as they would assess the credibility of any information. They also agreed that in most cases reporters should verify the information by contacting an official of the organization that put up the Web page. In addition, they agreed that most information should be attributed. Specifically, they agreed that information should be attributed to the Web page if time is short and the reporter is unable to contact the organization. And they stipulated that no information -- with a few exceptions -- from a Web page, especially that contained on personal home pages, can be used in a story without the appropriate attribution. If information cannot be verified or if doubts about its accuracy persist, editors agreed that students should follow the time-worn axiom and leave it out.

These formal guidelines establish a procedure that, if followed, would minimize the risk of inaccurate or misleading information being taken from Web sites and included in stories (Ketterer, 1997). They were designed to follow Mills' (1859) and Ross' (1930) dictum that information in the press should "do no harm." Accurate information must be the foundation on which citizens base their opinions and cast their ballots in the Information Age. Journalists have an ethical obligation to ensure that newspapers provide that foundation.

Preliminary and final drafts of the guidelines, which appear in the appendix, were approved. A shortened version of the guidelines was included for handy reference on the main Missourian resources page. It also is included in the appendix.

After a brown bag seminar to acquaint the school with the site, the researcher discussed it in advanced reporting and copy editing classes. The purpose and design of the site was explained as it was shown on a large screen and each student could view it on a computer. The steps to access and to critically evaluate information on the Web were discussed along with the guidelines and ethical considerations. Each student received a copy of the long version of the guidelines, and they were discussed.

As a homework assignment, the students were given a scavenger hunt containing questions that could be answered via links on the site. The assignment, which is included in the appendix, contained a question for each page on the site. It was designed to acquaint the students with the site and to show them the type of information that could be found using the Web. The students had to answer the question and to supply the URL of the site where they found the answer. The latter requirement prevented students from simply using a search engine.

One student told a faculty editor that it was "the easiest assignment all year," which is not surprising for today's Internet-savvy undergraduates. Several students said later in the semester that the assignment helped them learn about the Web and the site, which was its purpose. (The following semester the researcher developed a Web exercise specifically for copy editors, who usually verify the accuracy of information in stories. It is included in the appendix.)

Students were encouraged to send e-mail to the researcher about other useful Web sites, which could be added to make the site a better resource. A hypertext link to the researcher's e-mail address was included on most pages on the site.

Finding the site (Ketterer, 1996) is easy. It is the default on Netscape for every computer in the *Missourian* newsroom. Because it is on the Web, it can be used by anyone worldwide, including our instructors and students in beginning journalism classes and alumni. Some of our reference librarians are using it to teach these students about the Web. Some pages have sensitive information, such as our police beat book. Access to that information is restricted by Internet Provider address.

At the suggestion of a teaching assistant, a page explaining the site also was added to the main home page. The page includes information on how to download information from Web sites.

Results

After the students completed the scavenger hunt, a computer program called a computer program called Analog was used to compile statistics on site use during the remaining three months of the winter semester. The main home page was accessed 2 1540 times during the first month. But that figure is misleading because the page comes up every time someone clicks on Netscape in the newsroom. A more accurate figure, 1262 times, was obtained by adding up the times each page on the main page was accessed.

In order to make the site easy to access and to encourage its use, no password is required, thus making it accessible from anywhere in the world. A review of user URLs indicated that nearly all of the accesses came from the M.U. School of Journalism, although statistics are not available specifically for the *Missourian* newsroom. It is impossible to ascertain whether that number represents a significant change from the previous semester because no statistics of Web use were kept prior to the study. But the first month's figures appear to indicate that the site was useful to students.

Table 1 in the appendix shows that, as expected, the city desk beats page was accessed the most during the first month, 317 times. Table 2 indicates that when you add up the accesses to all of the beat pages, you get 369 times, a difference of 52. Apparently, some students are accessing the beat pages directly, possibly via a bookmark. The Local Government Beat page was accessed the most, 79 times, closely followed by the Politics Beat page at 75. This appears to be a continuation of the apparent heavier use of the earlier Copy Desk Reference Site by government reporters. The Education Beat page was next at 44 times, followed by the Health Care Beat page at 38. Education and health care are the city's major industries. The Weekly beat page was used the least, 6 times.

The Sports Beat page, however, was used the most of any beat page, 149 times. As mentioned earlier, sports reporters and editors use it daily to check on games and for other sports information, including statistics.

The Digital Media and Online Morgues had the second highest use of the main pages, 219. This ranking could reflect the use of the online morgues, which appeared to be the top use of the Copy Desk Reference Page. The online morgue page could still have the highest use because the beat page use is divided among 12 beats.

It is impossible to tell which individual link was used the most because computer logs provide no record once the user leaves Missourian Newsroom Resources to access a Web site.

The Search Engines home page was next at 144, which is not surprising. Search engines help reporters and copy editors find information if they cannot find the appropriate link.

The Phone Directory page was next at 108. Reporters apparently use it frequently to avoid charges for directory assistance. Seasoned reporters and copy editors know that it is an invaluable source.

The remainder of the main pages had the following accesses: City of Columbia, 94; General, 86; Internet Sites for Journalists, 67; Sources, E-mail Addresses and Discussion Group Lists, 53; Copy Desk: Editing and Design, 21; Missourian Web Guidelines, 15; and How to Use the Site, 13. Because the site was designed for simplicity, how to use the site appears obvious. The low usage of the guidelines is cause for concern, although all of the intermediate reporting students have the long version.

During the next two months, overall usage was 1144 and 853 respectively, yielding a mean of 1095 per month. The dramatic drop during the last month appears to be due to finals and the fact that most reporters appear to have written most of their required stories by that time. But the overall downward trend indicates that it is important for editors to continually reinforce the utility of the Web as an information source.

The overall rank of the main resource pages was remarkably stable, with the exception of the Sports Beat, Internet Search Engines and How to Use the site. The Sports Beat page was the only one to continually increase, from 144 the first month to 190 the last month. Apparently, the sports staff found the links more useful as the semester progressed. Internet Search Engines also increased from 144 to 173 before falling dramatically to 131 during the last month, another indication that finals might have had an impact on usage. How to Use the site nearly doubled from 13 to 23 before falling slightly to 18.

The city desk beat pages followed the same overall trend of declining usage and stability in ranking, although there was more variability in these pages. Local Government and Politics had the highest average usage, continuing the dominance of the local government beat. But the Criminal Justice beat moved up to third, likely because it contains the police beat book that is accessed frequently. Education and Health Care were next, and the other beats remained in the same order. Because the usage of some beats was so low, the researcher explained in detail the resources of the pages in individual beat meetings. The increased usage for Religion and Neighbors appears to indicate that these presentations spurred usage, which is more evidence that reinforcement can be effective.

Looking ahead

The results appear to indicate that the site is useful in getting students to use the resources of the Web. Although the overall picture appears to be encouraging, the lower than expected use of some of the resource pages, including some of the city desk beat pages, indicates that more needs to be done to encourage their use. Because the Web is a relatively new tool, educators and editors must become knowledgeable about its resources and suggest sites that can be used for background and to provide information for stories. Students must begin to view the Web as an important resource and use it when appropriate.

Although the researcher has had mostly positive comments from students about the site, a more scientific means of assessment is necessary. Besides the Analog data, students should be administered a questionnaire that includes some open-ended questions about the site and Web use.

Perhaps the most important statistic is that the *Missourian* did not print a correction stating that inaccurate or misleading information had been taken from the Web and used in a story. But it is also possible that the guidelines were so rigid that they prevented useful information from appearing in stories. *Missourian* editors plan to review the guidelines.

It is difficult to tell how well students are assessing the credibility of information on the Web. The picture could become clearer, however, if the researcher interviewed students selected randomly. Faculty editors should also be interviewed.

To assess how the reporters handled attribution of information from the Web, the researcher could conduct a content analysis of the newspaper during the semester.

The results of these inquiries could be used to reassess Missourian Newsroom Resources and the methods used to teach students how to use the guidelines and hypertext links that it contains. The adjustments that are made should help better serve the students and the profession.

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Appendix

Columbia Missourian

Copy Desk Reference Sites

"Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find the information upon it." -- Samuel Johnson

---

Internet Search

- Alta Vista
- Bob Sullivan's Collection of Search Engines
- Salt Lake Tribune's Links to On-line Newpapers
- On-line Telephone Directory
- Legal Resources
- Missourian Copy Desk Sites for Journalists
- The Virtual Reference Desk
- The Reporter's Internet Survival Guide

Columbia

- Digital Missourian Morgue Search
- Weather
- Columbia Public Schools
- Higher Education

- City Council Members
- Key Facts and Phone Numbers
- Hospitals
- Business and Industry
- Recreation

Missouri

- State House of Representatives
- State Senate
- Other State Government and Courts
- Cities
- Missouri Schools
- Missouri Weather

United States

- House of Representatives
- Senate
- U.S. Government
- Election Line
- Constitution
- States
- National Weather

Checklist to Evaluate Internet Sites

What is the Universal Resource Locator (URL), or address, of the World Wide Web site?

____

What is the name of the organization?

____

What type of site is it?

☐ **GOVERNMENT**
☐ **CORPORATE**
☐ **INTEREST GROUP**
☐ **PRIVATE**
☐ **EDUCATIONAL**
OTHER, PLEASE
SPECIFY:____

When was the site last updated?

DAY: ________________ **MONTH** ________________ **YEAR** ___________

Does the site have a search capability?

☐ YES
☐ NO

If YES, what kinds of information can be searched?

PLEASE SPECIFY: ____

What type of information is contained on the site? **CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.**

☐ BREAKING NEWS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION
☐ REPORTS WRITTEN BY THE ORGANIZATION
☐ STATISTICS COMPILED BY THE ORGANIZATION
☐ PRESS RELEASES
☐ HOW TO CONTACT OFFICIALS IN THE ORGANIZATION
☐ BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT ORGANIZATION
☐ DEFINITION OF TERMS
OTHER, PLEASE
SPECIFY:____

To where is the site linked? **CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.**

☐ OTHER BRANCHES OF THE ORGANIZATION
☐ OTHER SITES RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION
☐ REPORTS WRITTEN BY THE ORGANIZATION
☐ STATISTICS COMPILED BY THE ORGANIZATION
☐ BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION
☐ HOW TO CONTACT OFFICIALS OF THE ORGANIZATION
☐ DEFINITION OF TERMS
☐ NO LINKS
OTHER, PLEASE
SPECIFY:____

What is the date of the most recent information on the site? P

DAY: ________________ MONTH ________________ YEAR ___________

If you were writing a story, which of the following types of information would the site provide? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

☐ BACKGROUND MATERIAL TO ASK QUESTIONS
☐ BACKGROUND MATERIAL TO PUT IN STORY
☐ MEANS OF CONTACTING OFFICIALS
☐ LATEST INFORMATION TO ASK QUESTIONS
☐ LATEST INFORMATION TO PUT IN STORY
☐ NO USEFUL INFORMATION
OTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE SPECIFY:

____

On a 1 to 7 scale where 1 is very credible and 7 is not very credible, how would you rate the credibility of information at the site? CIRCLE THE CORRECT NUMBER

VERY CREDIBLE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NOT VERY CREDIBLE

On a 1 to 7 scale where 1 is not very useful and 7 is very useful, how would you rate the usefulness of information at the site for your reporting beat? CIRCLE THE CORRECT NUMBER

VERY USEFUL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NOT VERY USEFUL

On a 1 to 7 scale where 1 is very easy to navigate and 7 is very difficult to navigate, how would you rate your ability to get around the site? CIRCLE THE CORRECT NUMBER

VERY EASY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 NOT DIFFICULT

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

NEWSROOM WEB RESOURCES

How to Use Missourian Web Resources.	Missourian Guidelines for Using Information from the World Wide Web	City Desk Beat Reference Pages	Sports Beat Reference Page
General Information	Digital Media and Online Morgues	Phone Directories	Sources, E-mail Addresses and Discussion Group Lists
Internet Search Engines	Weather	Maps	City of Columbia
Photojournalism Reference Page	Copy Desk: Editing and Design	Internet Sites for Journalists	

Back to the top

This page was created by Stan Ketterer, Missourian news editor, graduate instructor and doctoral student. It was created Nov. 25, 1996.

EMAIL ***Send questions or comments to: c249198@showme.missouri.edu***

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

CITY DESK BEATS

Business	Criminal Justice	Education	Environment
Food	Health Care	Local Government	Neighbors
Politics	Religion	Science	Weekly

EMAIL *Suggestions for useful sites are welcome. Please include the URL in a message. Thank you. c249198@showme.missouri.edu*

Back to the main Missourian Newsroom page

This page was created by Stan Ketterer, Missourian news editor, graduate instructor and doctoral student. It was created Nov. 25, 1996.

EMAIL ***Send questions or comments to: c249198@showme.missouri.edu***

COLUMBIA
MISSOURIAN

EDUCATION BEAT

Columbia public, private and parochial schools	Columbia Public Schools Home Page	Columbia Board of Education	Mid-Missouri Higher Education Links
M.U. Home Page	M.U. Faculty Council	Stephens College	Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Show-Me Standards	Missouri Education Links	U.S. Department of Education	Educational Resources Information Center
National Library of Education	Regional Education Libraries	National Center for Education Statistics	Chronicle of Higher Education
State Education Standards and Cirricula	Department of Education Gopher	Other Education Gophers	National Institue for Literacy
U.S. Office of Adult and Vocational Education	Planet Earth Home Page of Colleges and Universities	American Universities Homepage Locator	Profnet
Profnet Experts Database	Business, Trade and Technical Schools	Guide to Historically Black Colleges and Universities	Virtual Library of Education
Business, Trade and Technical Schools	National Education Association	U.S. House Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities	Federal Resource Center for Special Education
National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities	Internet Special Education Links	ADD/LD Online Resource Center	Higher Education Improvement Center

Suggestions for useful sites are welcome. Please include the URL in a message. Thank you. c249198@showme.missouri.edu

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Back to City Desk Beats Page

Missourian Guidelines for Using Information on the Web

by Stan Ketterer

General Guidelines

The World Wide Web is becoming an important source of information for journalists. But journalists still must evaluate that information with a critical eye by following standard practices for assessing the credibility and accuracy of the information, primarily factual information. At the Missourian, in most cases that assessment must include contacting the source of the information to verify it. If the information is used in a story, it normally must be attributed.

Although the information on each site will be different, in general apply the same criteria that you would use when assessing the credibility and accuracy of any document. Ask yourself whether you would use the information if it came from a similar printed source. As always, be skeptical and do whatever is necessary to ensure the accuracy of the information. When in doubt, leave it out.

Although the use of the Web as a reporting tool is in its infancy, it appears most information will be used to acquaint the reporter with the background of a story. Online morgues and some digital media provide a quick and efficient way to gather background information. If this factual information has appeared in previous Missourian stories or in wire stories published in the Missourian or Digital Missourian, it generally does not require attribution.

But the use of attribution when including information from the morgues of other media sources must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Follow the same guidelines that you would use when taking information from Lexis-Nexis. In general, attribute any information that has been uncovered by the media source, controversial information, and quoted or paraphrased information.

Online dictionaries, glossaries and other reference sources can be used similarly. In general, such information does not need to be attributed, but the source of the information must be evaluated. If you are in doubt about the information, verify it with another source. Web sites maintained by government agencies and educational institutions are particularly credible for this type of information. Exercise more caution when using reference sources from commercial and not-for-profit organizations.

Armed with this background information, reporters can ask more probing questions in interviews and put the story into greater context. The interview is an excellent time to verify the information and get the source's views on it. Ask whether the information on the Web page is current and current. Then, ask the source to put it into perspective.

Sometimes information will be taken directly from the Web site and attributed. In general, this information will come from a highly credible source, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, or source documents published on the Web. It also can be used when the story is about the Web site itself. But it also might be employed on a breaking story when the Web is the chief source of information. ALWAYS consult your faculty editor if you take information directly from a Web Page.

In general, attribute factual information to the organization, such as IBM, when you have verified it with a source. Although you should always try to verify the information, sometimes it is not possible to reach the source. If you have not verified the information, consult your faculty editor. In most cases, unverified information must be attributed to the Web page. If you have doubts about the accuracy of the information, get that information from another source, such as a book or a contact person.

Reporters also can use Web resources to find out how to contact sources. Online telephone, e-mail and sources directories are helpful for this purpose.

Assessing a Site's Credibility

As mentioned previously, standard journalistic practices must always be used when assessing the credibility and accuracy of information on the Web. In general, the overall credibility of a site can be determined by rigorously following these practices. But the Web site itself also will provide some clues. These clues include the address of the Web site, the organization that maintains it, and when the site was last updated.

The Web Address

Look at the three-letter extension that appears at the end of the first part of the Web address, or URL. Web sites are assigned extensions according to the organization that maintains them. The categories are:

.gov (government)
.mil (military)
.edu (education)
.com (commercial)
.org (not-for-profit organization)
.net (network administration)

All organizations will put some slant, or point of view, on at least some of the information that they provide. The amount of slant varies according to which category the organization is in, and it differs for organizations within categories. In addition, the amount of slant varies according to the organization's purpose for maintaining its Web site. Take that purpose into account when assessing the credibility of the information on the organization's site.

The most credible information will generally come from government sites. In most cases this information is designed to serve the public interest, although some bureaucrats will slant it to make themselves and their organizations look good.

A major purpose of some governmental organizations is to provide credible information to the public. This information often includes comes from Web versions of source documents. In most cases, you can take information directly from the sites and attribute it. These sites include the National Institutes for Health, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the FBI, and NASA.

Other governmental organizations are less diligent in ensuring the accuracy of the information on their sites. Evaluate the information critically and verify it. The telephone number of contacts are usually included on the site. Talk to the contact to verify the information and put it into context.

The information on military sites is generally credible, but much of what you need may not be there because of national security or image concerns. For example, information about the sexual harassment cases at Fort Leonard Wood appeared in a brief on the base newspaper. In all cases, contact military officials.

The primary goal of many of the commercial sites, such as the Pepsi site, is public relations. Evaluate the information accordingly. That situation is changing as more and more companies are doing business on the Web. But problems with the security of information will limit commercial use for the foreseeable future. In general, do not use factual information from commercial sites in a story unless you verify it and attribute it.

By their nature, not-for-profit organizations promote a point of view. The information that they include _ and exclude _ is designed to promote that view. Evaluate the information accordingly. In general, do not use factual information from not-for-profit sites in a story unless you verify it, often from other sources, and attribute it.

The credibility of information on educational sites is usually mixed. Colleges and university sites often have information, especially from source documents, that is highly credible. Information provided by the colleges and universities themselves is usually credible.

But student home pages also have an ".edu" extension. Students might not be following the same standards for accuracy as the colleges and universities. Be very critical when assessing information from personal home pages. In ALL cases, contact the person and get the permission of a faculty editor before using information from a student home page. The same guidelines apply to all personal home pages, including those on online services such as American Online (aol) and the Microsoft Network (msn).

Evaluate the Organization

Evaluate the organization or person that maintains the Web site. As pointed out earlier, the credibility of the information will vary, even within the U.S. government.

Generally, the more that you know about an organization, the better you will be able to assess the credibility of the information. For example, you could more easily assess a story in the New York Times than in Sally's Daily News. Remember, everybody on the Web is a potential publisher and they will not all have the same standards for accuracy and accountability.

If you do not know much about an organization on the Web, find out. Use the morgue, the library, Nexis-Lexis or some other means to get enough background information to evaluate the information critically. In ALL cases, when you know little about a Web site, contact the source and attribute the information. Discuss the site, source and the information with your faculty editor.

Site Updates

Find the date when the site was last updated. The date usually appears at the top or bottom of the page, especially the first page of the site. If the site has been updated recently, you can be more confident about the timeliness of the information and it indicates that the organization is concerned with current developments.

However, although a site has been updated recently, it is no guarantee that the information itself has been updated. The page might have been updated but not the information on it. This is another reason why in most cases you must verify it with a source.

If the site has not been updated for a while, look for the date that the site was created, which usually appears at the bottom of the home page. If the site has not been updated for a while, if no date appears, or if it was created a while ago and has not been updated, be more skeptical of the information. In ALL cases, contact the source of the information and let your faculty editor know about the timeliness of the information.

However, just because a site has been updated recently, it provides no guarantee that the information is accurate.

Missourian Web Guidelines

by Stan Ketterer

Staff members of the Columbia Missourian newsroom must be on guard when using the resources of the World Wide Web. The degree of accuracy and the credibility of information on Web sites varies widely. Just ask Pierre Salinger, the former presidential press secretary. Salinger was ridiculed when he publicly proclaimed that a bogus document blaming the U.S. government for shooting down a TWA jetliner was authored by the French intelligence service.

In general, staff members must evaluate information on the Web with a critical eye by following standard journalistic practices for assessing the credibility and accuracy of information. There are also a few evaluative tools that are unique to the Web.

In most cases, Missourian staff members must contact the source of the information to verify it before it can be used in a story. In general, attribute all information from a Web site that is used in a story.

Staff Rules

1. Before information from a Web site can be used in a story, it must be verified with a source. There are a few exceptions to this rule. They include taking information from a highly credible government site like the Census Bureau home page and from Web versions of source documents on such credible sites, and when you can't contact the source on a breaking story because of time constraints. But a faculty editor must clear all exceptions.

2. In most cases, information taken directly from the Web and used in a story must be attributed. If you have verified the information on a home page with a source, you can use the organization in the attribution, e.g. "according to the EPA" or "EPA figures show." If you cannot verify the information after trying repeatedly, attribute unverified information to the Web page, e.g. "according to the Voice of America's site on the World Wide Web." Consult your faculty editor before using unverified information in your story.

If you have doubts about the accuracy of the information and you cannot reach the source, get it from another source, such as a book or a another contact person. When in doubt, leave the information out of your story.

3. Check the extension on the first part of the site's address, or URL, to get clues as to the nature of the organization and the likely slant of the information. The extensions are:

.gov (government)
.mil (military)
.edu (education)
.com (commercial)
.org (not-for-profit organization)
.net (Internet administration)

Most of the government and military sites have credible and accurate information. In many cases, you can take the information directly from the site and attribute it to the organization. But consult your faculty editor until you get to know these sites.

The same is true for many of the sites of colleges and universities. If college and university sites have source documents, such as the Constitution, attribute the information to the source document. But beware. Personal home pages have ".edu" extensions, and the information is not always credible. DO NOT USE INFORMATION FROM A PERSONAL HOME PAGE WITHOUT CONTACTING THE PERSON AND WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF A FACULTY EDITOR.

In nearly all cases, DO NOT take information directly from the home pages of commercial and not-for-profit organizations and use it without verification. Verify and attribute all information on those pages.

4. Check the date when the page was last updated. The date generally appears at the top or the bottom on the first page of the site. Although a recent date does not ensure that the information is current, it does indicate that the organization is paying close attention to the site. If the site does not state when it was last updated, check when it was created. Creation dates generally appear at the bottom of the first page.

If no date appears, if the site has not been updated for a while, or if it was created a while ago, DO NOT use the information on the site unless you verify it with a source.

Name: ____________________________

J310 Web Scavenger Hunt

Go to the specified page on the Missourian Web Resources site. Use the links to supply the answer to the question. Write down the Universal Resource Locator, or URL, of the exact location where you found the information. The URL of the Missourian Web Resources site is:
http://www.missouri.edu/~jschool/missourian/index.html

BUSINESS BEAT
What is the interest rate that First National Bank in Columbia charges for a car loan?

Answer: ____

URL: ____

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BEAT
What is an arraignment?

Answer: ____

URL: ____

EDUCATION BEAT
How much does tuition and general fees cost at Stephens College this academic year?

Answer: ____

URL: ____

ENVIRONMENT BEAT
What kind of topography dominates Rock Bridge Memorial State Park?

Answer: ____

URL: ____

FOOD BEAT

What is "dumb" wine?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

HEALTH BEAT

What are four of the "problem issues" cited in the Boone County Health Report Card?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BEAT

What are the three types of zoning in the Residential Districts category in Boone County?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

NEIGHBORS BEAT

Who is the current contact person for the Big Brothers/Sisters of Columbia?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

POLITICS BEAT

What are three of the committees on which state Sen. Ken Jacob, D-Columbia, serves?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

RELIGION BEAT

Who is the pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Columbia?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

SCIENCE BEAT

What does the chemical symbol Uno stand for and what is its atomic number?

Answer:

URL:

SPORTS REFERENCE PAGE

Who are three of this year's inductees into the Missouri Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame?

Answer:

URL:

DIGITAL MEDIA AND ONLINE MORGUES

What online newspaper serves the capital of North Dakota?

Answer:

URL:

SOURCES, E-MAIL ADDRESSES AND DISCUSSION GROUP LISTS

What are three sources for AIDS information?

Answer:

URL:

PHONE DIRECTORIES

What is the 800 number for the Microsoft Corporation?

Answer:

URL:

SEARCH ENGINES

What is the URL for the official Kansas Athletic Department home page?

URL:

COPY DESK: EDITING AND DESIGN

How should nicknames be punctuated according to AP style?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

CITY OF COLUMBIA

What ward does Chris Janku represent?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

INTERNET SITES FOR JOURNALISTS

What are three of the 12 states that bar unauthorized installation or use of cameras on private property?

Answer: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

Name:

J310 Web Exercise

Copy editors frequently must use the resources of the World Wide Web to verify information in stories. Read each sentence carefully. Every sentence will contain an error. Underline the error and then go to the specified page on the Missourian Web Resources site. Use the links contained on that page to find the information necessary to correct the error. Write the correct information in the blank provided. For example, if the error is Secretary of State Bill Clinton, write President Bill Clinton. You also must include the Universal Resource Locator, or Web address, of the exact location where you found the information. The URL of the Missourian Web Resources site is:

http://www.missouri.edu/~jschool/missourian/index.html

BUSINESS BEAT

Union Electric's Callaway nuclear plant began providing electricity to the public in June 1990.

Correction:

URL:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BEAT

The Sixth Amendment protects citizens against illegal searches and seizures.

Correction:

URL:

EDUCATION BEAT

David Ballinger, president of the Columbia Board of Education, opposed the plan.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

ENVIRONMENT BEAT

Katy Trail State Park makes use of the former Missouri Pacific railroad corridor.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

FOOD BEAT

Cheddar cheese originated in Switzerland.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

HEALTH BEAT

Meningitis is caused by inflammation of the meninges, which line the heart.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BEAT

County Commissioner Karin Mueller said she favored a charter form of government.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

NEIGHBORS BEAT

The Daniel Boone Regional Library serves Boone, Callaway and Cole counties.

Correction: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

POLITICS BEAT

Missouri legislators cannot serve more than 12 years in each house of the General Assembly.

Correction: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

RELIGION BEAT

Services, conducted by the Rev. Michael Lanagon, will be held 5 p.m. at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 673 West Boulevard S.

Correction: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

SCIENCE BEAT

Missouri has five species of poisonous snakes, including pigmy coral snakes.

Correction: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

WEEKLY BEAT

Fayette, named after the Marquis de Lafayette, is the home of Central Missouri State University.

Correction: ______________________________

URL: ______________________________

SPORTS REFERENCE PAGE

The St. Louis Cardinals baseball team selected shortstop George Kennedy in the 1997 Amateur Draft.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

DIGITAL MEDIA AND ONLINE MORGUES

Councilwoman Colleen Coble, 3rd Ward, has fought for stricter laws concerning domestic abuse.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

GENERAL INFORMATION

Under the terms of the Missouri Compromise, Missouri was admitted as a slave state in 1821, and Kansas was admitted as a free state.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

SOURCES, E-MAIL ADDRESSES AND DISCUSSION GROUP LISTS

Dr. Barbara Doll of M.U., an expert concerning the treatment of AIDS, is cautiously optimistic about the new treatment.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

PHONE DIRECTORIES

Visitation will be Thursday at Dulles Funeral Home, 3210 N. 10 Mile Drive, in Jefferson City.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

SEARCH ENGINES

Home Depot, the nation's largest home improvement retailer, has its headquarters in Los Angeles, Calif.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

WEATHER

Early June is the recommended time to plant tomatoes, peas and watermelons.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

MAPS

The Columbia Post Office is situated at the intersection of East Walnut and Tenth streets.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

CITY OF COLUMBIA

Mayor Darla Hindman welcomed the Chinese delegation to Columbia.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

PHOTOJOURNALISM RESOURCES

The photograph was taken by Missourian staff photographer Marie Ann Johnson.

Correction: ____

URL: ____

COPY DESK: EDITING AND DESIGN

The Watermelon Festival will be held Friday at Prairie View Farms, 113 Meadow Dr.

Correction:____

URL:____

INTERNET SITES FOR JOURNALISTS

Exit polling is allowed in all 50 states.

Correction:____

URL:____

Table 1

Usage of Missourian Newsroom Resources

HOME PAGES	M 1	M 2	M 3	Avg.
City Desk Beat Reference Pages	317	246	153	239
Digital Media and Online Morgues	219	147	111	159
Internet Search Engines	149	173	131	151
Sports Beat Reference Page	144	175	190	170
Phone Directories	108	101	88	99
City of Columbia	94	71	38	68
General Information	86	74	37	66
Internet Sites for Journalists	67	59	40	55
Sources, E-Mail Addresses and Discussion Group Lists	53	45	23	40
Copy Desk: Editing and Design	21	20	13	18
Missourian Guidelines for Using Information from the World Wide Web	15	10	10	12
How to Use Missourian Web Resources	13	23	19	18
Total	1286	1144	853	1095

These numbers represent how many times each page was accessed each month during the period of Feb. 20, 1997, to May 19, 1997. All of these links appear on the index page.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 2

Usage of Missourian Beat Pages

HOME PAGES	M 1	M 2	M 3	Avg.
Local Government	79	55	44	59
Politics	75	31	19	42
Education	44	23	14	27
Health Care	38	21	23	27
Criminal Justice	37	41	22	33
Environment	23	31	10	21
Business	21	14	16	17
Neighbors	14	13	18	15
Religion	13	22	11	15
Food	12	9	4	8
Science	7	11	3	7
Weekly	6	7	6	6
Total	369	278	190	279

These numbers represent how many times each page was accessed each month during the period of Feb. 20, 1997, to May 20, 1997. All of these links appear on the index page.